The Dell Library

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CAPTAIN JACK, THE UNION SPY;

OR,

IN VICKSBURG AND OUT.

By HAROLD T. GRAY.

"LET GO, YOU VILLAIN!" EXCLAIMED JACK IN DESPERATION, AS HE PLANTED HIS FOOT IN THE SECOND SCOUNDREL'S FACE.

Captain Jack, the Union Spy;

—OR,—

IN VICKSBURG AND OUT.

BY HAROLD T. GRAY.

CHAPTER I.

THE BATTLE.

"To arms! to arms, boys! They're coming like the whirlwind!"

Such was the ominous cry with which Captain Jack Stanley summoned together his company of raw troops.

Before his men were fairly out of their tents the gray lines of Confederate soldiers were seen advancing through the thick woods in front of the Union camp, joining in a deadly fire as they pressed forward.

Jack seized his sword and, undaunted by the wild confusion and terror which swayed his men and the Union forces all about them, rallied his company and made ready to withstand the awful onslaught.

The enemy's attack was a complete surprise.

The Union soldiers had small thought of a battle, and had been lounging about their tents in a manner characteristic of Sunday morning.

Many of them had not been in a general engagement, and the first smell of powder and the sight of the determined rebel line filled their minds with fear and caused a large number to turn on their heels and flee to the rear.

Captain Stanley's words, however, called many of the older heads to their senses, and before the advancing line had reached the Union camp the latter's battle line had been formed and a stubborn defense begun.

"Give it to 'em, boys!" Captain Stanley cried to his men above the rattle of musketry that was becoming louder every instant; "we'll show 'em how to fight!"

Like a rock he stood before his men, and with his sword in one hand and his revolver in the other, urged them to maintain their position.

But a mountain could scarcely have withstood that rushing charge.

Like demons bent on the work of total annihilation the gray lines came on.

Suddenly from a neighboring hillock a battery of artillery opened its destructive fire on the Union troops and seemed to direct all its energies against the brave little company that held its place while the troops on all sides of it were rapidly retreating.

The brave men fell one by one until nearly half their number lay prostrate on the ground.

Captain Stanley finally saw the utter uselessness of trying to maintain his position, but was too determined to give up the fight.

With flashing eyes he quickly raised his sword above his head, and in a voice that seemed to ring down the lines like the roar of a cannon, he shouted:

"Forward, boys! Follow me! Don't let 'em say they took our camp!"

Without waiting to see if his men followed he rushed straight against the enemy's column.

Half a dozen brave fellows who could not withstand the force of their leader's example rushed after him and tried to stem the advancing flood, but it was useless.

On the gray lines came, until Captain Jack was forced back beyond his camp and was compelled to see the enemy take his flags into their possession.

"Boys!" he shouted again, "they must not take those flags. Remember how we promised to defend them when they were presented to us when we left home, and let's after them with hearts of steel. Come, follow me!"

His band rallied at this call, and the surrounding troops, catching his indomitable spirit, pressed forward once more.

He led them straight toward the custodians of the captured flags, and while the enemy stood, amazed at his daring, he struck down with his sword the men who carried them, and snatching up the loved standards, he slowly retreated.

Not without loss of blood, however, for down his left arm there trickled a stream of red that told only too plainly that a bullet had found lodgment there.

In spite of the persuasions of his men he would not go to the rear, but with his handkerchief bound tightly about the wounded member he stood his ground.

But the overpowering force of numbers soon made it impossible for the Union forces to longer attempt to stay the progress of the rebel lines.

The Confederates swarmed out of the woods like bees and rushed forward to the assault with all the ardor of men already flushed with victory.

Their batteries, too, soon opened a terrific fire and filled the air with exploding shells and hurtling cannon-balls.

No human force could have withstood that awful charge, and Captain Jack at last, seeing the utter folly of trying to keep up a show of resistance, gave the order to retire slowly.

Before the line had retreated one hundred yards, Ralph Hadly, a sergeant in

Jack Stanley's company, whom the young captain had looked upon with a great deal of favor, suddenly fell, pierced through the breast with a bullet.

Captain Jack saw him fall, and instantly made up his mind to prevent the body from falling into the hands of the enemy.

Though his face was of an ashen hue and his strength well-nigh spent from the effects of his own wound, he turned to his men, and in a commanding voice ordered them to halt and advance.

They were slow to obey his orders, but he waited not for support.

Casting aside his sword he bounded forward amid the fearful fusillade in front of him, and catching the sergeant's body in his arms made his way back almost to his own line.

But the effort was too great for him, for before he had barely reached cover he suddenly threw his unencumbered arm into the air and dropping his burden at the same moment sunk to the earth with a groan.

"Save me, boys, save me!" he gasped, as his closing eyes caught sight of the advancing gray lines.

CHAPTER II.

IN A CONFEDERATE HOME.

Captain Jack Stanley enlisted in an Ohio regiment about six months before the scene described in the preceding chapter.

He had left his home and his old mother, whose only support he was, almost at the first call to arms, and pledged his strength and life to the defense of his country.

A young man of indomitable courage and widespread popularity, the company of which he became a member were not long in chosing him for their captain, and as such he had thus far led the gallant little band with unexampled skill and bravery.

His many acts of kindness and consideration, moreover, had endeared his men to him, and when they saw him fall on the field of battle, after conducting such a gallant defense, to a man they halted in their retreat, and with the energy of fiends once more dashed forward to his rescue.

A sharp struggle ensued, and then the rebels, as if in admiration of the devotion of the little band to its heroic captain, slowly fell back and allowed the two wounded men to be carried from the field.

A surgeon was quickly summoned to Jack's side, and after a cursory examination pronounced him dangerously wounded.

Indeed, he was already beginning to show signs of delirium, and as the only hope of saving his life the surgeon ordered him to be taken to some quiet house in the vicinity.

An orderly was at once sent out in quest of the desired retreat, accompanied by Jack in an ambulance.

A ride across the fields soon took them out of range of the battle and to a substantial country-house.

The orderly knocked at the door, and in a polite manner asked to be allowed a single room in the house for his wounded captain.

An old colored servant ushered him into the drawing-room, where two young Southern girls and an elderly lady stood gazing out of the window at the smoke arising from the distant battle-field.

"This is a Confederate home," said Rachel Wilson, the elder of the two girls, in reply to the orderly's request, "and no Yankee officer can enter it without force."

"But, miss, he is dying, I fear, and he was as brave as a lion all day in the battle. Won't you please give him quarters for a day or two?"

"A Yankee officer, I care not how brave, cannot find a retreat in a home which his army would only too willingly devastate and destroy because we are rebels." And the young woman moved haughtily away.

Her younger sister had been of the same spirit, but the young orderly turned such a beseeching look upon her that she quickly went to her sister's side and begged that the young officer be allowed to come in.

"I'll give him my own room," she said, in her eagerness.

"You had better let him come in," added the elderly lady.

"Yes, that's what I say, auntie," pleaded Teddy, the younger sister.

"Well, if he must come in, let him. But remember, it is not with my consent." And Rachel walked from the room in anger.

Accordingly Captain Jack was carried carefully up into one of those large, airy upper rooms in which Southern homes abound and placed on a couch, attended by the orderly.

A surgeon soon after called and dressed his wounds, but held out scant hopes for his living.

For two days Jack's life hung by a thread.

Finally toward evening on the third day it seemed as if he must quickly die.

Rachel Wilson during this time had

not entered his room, but when Teddy came to her just at dusk and told her that the young captain was dying she consented to go to his side.

Slowly and alone she entered the room and approached the couch of the wounded hero, and then for a long time stood looking down into his handsome face through the twilight.

Touched by pity for his sufferings she placed her soft hand on his hot brow and smoothed back the raven locks that hung over it.

Suddenly Jack's great black eyes slowly opened and a faint smile overspread his handsome features as he breathed:

"Mother!"

From that hour Rachel became his constant nurse and from that hour Jack begun to grow better.

In a week he was on his feet and able to go down-stairs, and in two weeks he was almost himself again.

He longed once more to rejoin his command and march to the front, but Rachel would hear of no such proceedings until he was thoroughly recovered.

It may have been his bravery, it may have been his beauty, it may have been his suffering—who can tell? Certainly something had recently occurred to cause Rachel to cherish a tender feeling for the young officer, and when, on the day before Jack was to quit the house to rejoin his comrades they found themselves together, Jack broached the subject of his gratitude for her kindness, and ended by offering her his love.

In her shy Southern way she told him that ostensibly she was engaged to her cousin, a young Confederate officer, whom she did not love, and finally admitted in answer to Jack's entreaties that her heart was all his own and had been since she had first touched his hot brow when he was supposed to be dying.

"But I cannot marry you for a long, long time," she said, naively.

"No," answered Jack; "I would not ask you to do that. My country needs all my heart at present; but when this cruel war is ended I will come to claim you for my wife. And you will be so?"

"Yes," she whispered, as Jack folded her in his arms.

"No, by heaven, you shall not!" cried a tall young Confederate officer, advancing into the room. "This man is a sneak!"

"Fred, how dare you!" cried Rachel, with flaming eyes.

"How dare I? By the law of war. I am a Confederate officer and will see that my will is carried out." And Fred Jackson drew his sword, and calling from an adjoining room two tough-looking graycoats, he ordered them to seize and bind Captain Jack.

"Never!" cried Jack, as he retreated a step and prepared to fight.

CHAPTER III.

SENTENCED TO DEATH.

A momentary struggle only was necessary to overcome Jack in his weakened condition. He was placed in a chair, and the two Confederate soldiers with drawn weapons stood guard over him.

For a moment Jack remained silent, then turning his piercing eyes on Rachel, said:

"Is this a trick?"

"No, Jack," she made haste to reply. "I do not know by what means he came here; I do know that I had no hand in his coming."

"But we are within Union lines and this man is a Confederate officer."

"A word of explanation may suffice to gratify the curiosity of this Yankee interloper in a true Southern home. I have come here with these two companions to spend my furlough because this is my home and this woman here is to be my wife. I came under cover of darkness, and thus escaped capture at the hands of your fellow-minions."

"Fred, you are forgetting yourself. In the absence of my brother I am mistress here. You have no right to enter here and thus violate the sacredness of this home. I command you to let that man free!"

"You speak harshly, Rachel. Moreover, I do not feel inclined to obey your command since this man is not only my country's enemy, but also my rival in love. I intend to deal with him summarily."

"Don't you dare to harm a hair of his head!" cried Rachel, her Southern spirit beginning to manifest itself.

"Leave that to me!" sarcastically replied the young Confederate; then turning to the two guards, he continued: "Take the fellow to his room and keep him there till I give you further orders."

Jack was accordingly escorted from the drawing-room without any show of resistance, for he saw it was useless to combat with the two strong men in charge of him. When he reached his room his threw himself on his couch and tried to form some plan by which he could free himself.

Meanwhile Rachel and her cousin were having a spirited debate below-stairs.

"My pretty young cousin, so this is the way you are conducting yourself in your brother's absence, is it?"

"That is my business, Fred Jackson, and it will be my brother's to reprimand this insolence when he returns."

"Your brother will be here shortly. To-morrow's sun will see the Confederates advancing upon the Union lines, and if all goes well the hireling Yanks will be swept out of sight, and this man whom you have quartered here and made your hero, will be one of the spoils of war."

"You're a coward and a knave, Fred Jackson, and I hate you," and with an indignant toss of the head, Rachel swept out of the room.

"Ah, ha, my pretty one! so you are in high dudgeon, eh? Well, we shall see how you act in twelve hours from now," and as he spoke he moved toward the door.

Suddenly the dull boom of a cannon fell on his ear, then another and another.

"They've begun the fight already. May it be a victory!" ejaculated Jackson, as he sprung toward a window and gazed out.

"A night attack, by heaven! We shall whip them, sure!"

The dull roar of artillery was soon followed by the sound of screeching shells and the long rattle of musketry, and in a short time it was easy to tell that a terrific contest was on.

For a while it was difficult to tell which way the battle was going, but when the sound of the engagement begun to grow closer and closer, and now and then scattered bodies of men in blue were seen in gloom making their way in full retreat, it was plain that the Union forces were suffering a reverse.

Jack, in his room with the two guards near him, was in a fever of impatience.

From the sounds outside he knew that an engagement was being fought, and his martial spirit urged him fiercely to the conflict.

Finally, he could stand it no longer, and bounding from his couch he shot between his guards and out of the door like a flash.

He flew down the stairs and dashed into the drawing-room where he suddenly brought up before Rachel.

"Jack, what's the matter?" she cried in alarm, as she saw his white face.

"My sword and cap!" he exclaimed, in a broken voice, "where are they? I must go and help them. See," and he pointed through the window where in the dusk long lines of Union troops could be seen in full retreat, "They are falling back. Let me go and lead them to victory."

"Jack," she said quietly, laying one hand on his shoulder and leading him to a chair, "you're ill and cannot leave this house."

As she spoke he fell into a seat, overcome by his exertions.

By this time his guards had reached the lower room and advancing upon the stricken man were about to drag him back to his prison when Rachel interposed.

"Don't you dare to touch him!" she cried, rushing in front of them with flashing eyes, "I'll be responsible for his safe-keeping."

She had scarcely finished speaking before there was a loud clatter without and the next instant Fred Jackson rushed into the room, followed by two Confederate troopers.

"We've won, boys!" he exclaimed, his cheeks aglow with excitement. "The Yankee hirelings are in full retreat and our lines already encircle this house. That man is a prisoner and a spy, boys. Take him away, guard him well and at to-morrow's dawn shoot him down like a dog!"

At these words Rachel fell in a dead faint, while Jack suffered himself to be led away to his doom without a word of protest.

CHAPTER IV.

ESCAPED.

Captain Jack's prison was a small outhouse in the rear of the Wilson homestead.

When first thrown into it he for a long time lay in one corner, scarcely conscious of his surroundings.

Finally he roused himself with an effort and peered out through a small opening in the side of the structure.

It was a bright moonlight night, and here and there in the vicinity were seen the smouldering embers of the camp-fires of the victorious Confederates.

Before the building stood a guard so motionless that he appeared to be asleep.

Jack was about to attract his attention when suddenly he heard the lock turn in the door.

Before he could face about it was swung open and a slight, little figure glided into the room, closing the door behind it.

One glance was all that Jack needed to tell him who it was.

"Rachel!" he gasped, folding her in his arms and implanting a kiss on her lips, "have you ventured here to bid me good by?"

"No," she whispered, tremblingly; "I have come to save you."

"But how? I am surrounded by en-

enmies and can never hope to get through their lines."

"I'll find a way, Jack," she replied, confidently.

"But how did you get by the guard outside?"

"I sent Mose to him with an abundance of food, in which was also a sleeping draught, in order that the poor fellow might overload his stomach and possibly fall asleep. He has just done so."

In spite of his dangerous position Jack could not repress a smile.

"Now for yourself, Jack, for we must hurry. I want you to leave here and go straight back to the stables. Keep in the dark as much as possible. When you get to the stables you will see Mose, and he will lead you through the woods beyond our lines and then give you a horse. Ride then for your life in the direction he points out to you."

For answer Jack imprinted a kiss on the brave young girl's upturned lips.

"And now good by, Jack!"

"But I shall see you again?"

"Yes, when the war is over, as I trust it soon will be, I shall expect to see you, Jack."

"And you shall also expect to become my wife?"

A naive smile was Rachel's answer.

"Go now, Jack," she whispered, "and may God be with you and protect you!"

A farewell kiss followed and then Jack shot by the still-sleeping guard and made his way to the stables, while Rachel closed and locked the door of the outhouse and then returned to her home.

Jack sped with all the haste he dared to the stables, where he was soon joined by Mose.

"Dis way, Massa Jack!" whispered Mose, and the next moment he was leading the Union captain into a dark growth of underbrush.

"Hev ter be keerful purty soon," Mose whispered, after they had traveled about half a mile. "Confed'rates hab der lines 'roun' heah somewhar, an' 'twon't do ter run nigh o' any pickets."

These words were scarcely out of the colored guide's mouth before a rustling to the right told them that danger was near.

"Drop down!" said Mose to Jack as a gray-coated picket turned his head toward where the two stood.

The noise they made, however, was sufficient to attract the attention of the picket and he at once started in the direction of the cowering couple.

"He's seed us!" whispered Mose, "an' you'll hev ter git. When I grapples him you light out an' keep straight through here to the road. Dar you'll find a horse ready. Take 'im an' ride norf ez fast ez you kin, fer dey'll be after yer like bloodhoun's."

Mose had scarcely finished before the picket was upon them.

He was about to exclaim "Who goes there?" when the old negro rose and grabbed him about the neck, and the next instant the two had fallen to the ground in a fierce struggle.

Jack took advantage of the situation to steal forward as fast as he could, and before he was out of hearing of the two combatants he had reached the road and was looking around for the horse which Mose had mentioned.

His sharp eye soon caught sight of the animal tethered beneath a tree near by, and he soon made his way to its side.

Before he could put his foot in the stirrup, however, a dozen shots rung out in the direction from which he had just come, and he at once knew that his escape was discovered.

"Well," exclaimed Jack, as he threw himself into the saddle and turned the horse into the road, "they'll not catch me without a struggle, that's certain." And the next instant he dug his heels into the sides of his horse and was galloping at a mad pace up the road.

He had traversed probably a mile when suddenly there struck his ears a sound that filled him with terror.

A long, deep howl, then many short, sharp barks told him that bloodhounds had been put upon his track and were fast bearing down on him.

Above the noise made by the dogs he could also distinguish the clatter of horses' hoofs behind him, and for an instant he was prompted to stop his flight.

But only for an instant.

The thought of Rachel, of his mother and home, and of his country, spurred him on and filled his heart with a determination to die before he would give himself up.

The exigency of his case demanded that he should change his tactics, however.

Every moment the deep bark of the bloodhounds and the loud clatter of the horses' hoofs of his pursuers grew nearer and added to the certainty of his recapture.

He looked around and in the moonlight could see them coming after him like the wind.

He tried to urge his steed to a faster pace, but the animal was already beginning to show signs of exhaustion, and he became convinced that it could not hold its present gait much longer.

Once more he turned his head about to

see the position of his pursuers, when his horse tripped and stumbled and sent Jack whirling headlong into the dust before him.

"I'm lost now, sure!" exclaimed Jack, and in his mind's eye he could already see the fierce bloodhounds tearing at his throat.

CHAPTER V.

IN A BEAR'S DEN.

There was imbedded in Jack Stanley's nature that principle so common to all aspiring American youths, the determination never to give up a fight until his last breath was drawn, and nowhere on the battle-field or in other tight places did he ever give a better exemplification of this principle than in his present predicament.

While his fall had for an instant bruised and stunned him, it had not rendered him unconscious, and he had scarce struck the ground before he was on his feet and planning how to continue his flight.

His horse had also by this time managed to rise to its feet, and Jack no sooner saw that the animal was not injured than his plan was formed. With the sound of his pursuers now frightfully close, he once more mounted his steed and dashed a short distance down the road.

A tall, thickly leafed tree with overhanging boughs stood beside the road, and up to this Jack drew.

Then quickly catching hold of one of the limbs he raised himself into the tree, at the same time giving the horse a resounding kick and a loud word of command that sent it galloping down the road.

He had scarcely time to hide himself in the thickest part of the branches before the bloodhounds dashed up to the tree. For a moment they stopped and sniffed about suspiciously, and then, with a succession of short, sharp barks, dashed on again after the flying horse.

In another instant the horsemen, all well mounted Confederate troopers, dashed on after the dogs without once stopping at the tree where Jack was hidden.

"I've fooled them!" he exclaimed, joyfully. "The bloodhounds have lost the scent and I am saved!"

Jack remained in his retreat for nearly an hour, when he heard his pursuers returning.

In the moonlight he could see their jaded steeds make their way back with the bloodhounds at their heels.

When the last one disappeared down the road he gave a great sigh of relief and descended to the ground.

After trying to get his stiffened limbs back into their normal condition, he looked once more down the road in the direction in which the Confederate troopers had disappeared, and then started out on a brisk trot in the opposite direction.

He continued to walk and run at intervals until he thought he had put a sufficient distance between himself and the enemy, when he set down to rest by the road-side.

The moon had long since sunk to rest behind the low mountain in the west, and Jack, tired and exhausted, was casting about in search of a secluded nook in which he might sleep, when he noticed the first streaks of dawn showing themselves in the eastern sky.

At the same moment a crackling of twigs behind him caused him to turn and behold through the dusky light the figure of a gray-coated sentry.

"By heaven!" Jack exclaimed, "I'm nearer danger than I thought I was. I'll have to make quick tracks out of here."

So saying, he groped his way along the road in the friendly shade of a thick hedge, and was finally out of sight of the enemy's picket.

"Not knowing the position of the rebs, it'll not be safe for me to show myself very much. I think I'll just worry along to the hills yonder and try to find a hiding-place there."

A quiet journey of half an hour brought Jack to a range of hills whose sides were thickly grown with trees.

He worked about for a few moments, and was soon rewarded by finding the entrance to a small cave.

Without a thought of danger he crawled in and tried to make himself comfortable a short distance from the mouth of the cave.

It was not long before he had fallen fast asleep.

He had probably lain in this condition for nearly an hour, when he was suddenly awakened by a low growl in front of him.

He quickly raised himself on his knees, and saw but a few feet before him a great black bear with glaring eyes and shining teeth advancing slowly toward him.

Jack immediately drew back and felt about his person in search of a weapon of some kind. Luckily he found in one of his pockets a large knife which he had carried to war.

This he drew out and opened in haste.

The bear continued to advance, and Jack, not wishing to engage such a foe

if it were possible to escape without a conflict, drew back.

He had continued these tactics until he found himself unable to proceed further on account of the smallness of the cave.

Just as he had reached this point an ominous growl from behind told him that he was surrounded, and that his only hope was to fight.

Without waiting for the bears to attack him, he at once sprung upon the animal in front of him, plunging his knife directly at its throat.

The blow was well-aimed, and with a yelp of pain the wounded bear leaped forward toward Jack.

But Jack was prepared and met the leap with another blow in the some spot as the former one.

The blood spurted from the gaping wounds and some of it dashing into our hero's eyes almost blinded him for an instant.

The animal behind him had not heard the cries of pain of its companion without making a move.

It had crawled forward until it was almost at Jack's feet and was just in the act of catching him in its embrace when Jack's hand, suddenly drawn back to give the animal in front of him the despatching blow struck it squarely in the eyes.

For a moment the bear was dazed, and that moment Jack sent home the thrust which caused the animal before him to keel over in a death-struggle and expire without a groan.

Jack then sprung in haste toward the opening of the cave, but had not gone half the distance when a blow from the paw of the second bear struck him to the ground.

In the fall Jack lost his hold upon the knife and his heart sunk within him as he beheld it strike the ground entirely out of his reach.

Before he could make up his mind what to do the bear had seized him in its tight clutch and was squeezing him in a manner that threatened quickly to take the life out of him.

CHAPTER VI.

ON A SECRET MISSION.

Luckily for Jack one of his arms was free, and quick as a flash he fastened his fingers in the throat of the black foe and pressed with all his might. Bruin evidently felt the pressure, for one of his paws quickly loosened.

"Now's my chance!" thought Jack, as he dug his fingers deeper into the animal's throat.

There was a dull, gurgling noise, and then our hero had the satisfaction of seeing the bear keel over on his back, bringing Jack with him.

But Jack had his wits about him now and was not slow to use his advantage.

He grabbed up his knife and with a powerful blow sent it deep into bruin's breast.

With a convulsive shiver the animal straightened out and died.

"I'll stay here no longer," our hero exclaimed as he gazed on the two inanimate forms before him. "I don't want to engage in any more bear fights just at present. I'd rather fight rebels." And with a bound he was out of the cave, down the mountain side and along the road at a lively gait.

He had just passed a clump of thickly growing bushes in his flight when he was suddenly brought to a halt by a loud "Who goes there?" and looking round he saw one of the boys of his own company with his gun leveled at him.

"Halloo, Phil," exclaimed Jack, rushing back and grasping the picket's hand; "you don't mean to say I'm within Union lines?"

"Yes, captain," was the answer. "I belong to the outside picket. Our camps are beyond that big growth of trees."

"Thank God I'm safe again. But I must hurry along. I'll see you again shortly." And with a kindly smile that had won for Jack the love of his boys he dashed along the road and into the camp.

The men no sooner beheld their devoted captain than a loud cheer rent the air and he was quickly lifted on to their shoulders and carried to his tent.

He had scarcely made himself acquainted with the surroundings before an order came for him to present himself at once at the headquarters of General Grant.

Startled almost out of his boots Jack spruced himself up as well as he could and was escorted to the tent of the commander of the army with a fast-beating heart.

As Jack entered the general was seated, surrounded by two of his chiefs, intently surveying a military map and smoking his usual cigar.

He looked up as Jack approached, and seeing who it was, rose quickly to his feet, and grasping Jack's hand, exclaimed feelingly:

"Young man, you were one of the heroes of Shiloh and I want to tender you my thanks."

Jack blushed like a school-boy, but managed to raise his eyes and say with a firm voice:

"I only did my duty."

"And it was well done, and for it I'm going to attach you to my personal staff for special service. You will have those straps changed when you leave here. Sit a moment and I'll tell you what I want done."

Jack waited in silence and in a short time, when the other officers had withdrawn, General Grant turned to him and said:

"Young man, I want you to do the most dangerous thing you have ever done, or probably will ever again have to do, in your life. I want you to get into Vicksburg, which I now intend to capture, and find out all you can regarding the strength and situation of the opposing forces there. Will you do it?"

Without a moment's hesitation Jack replied:

"I will, sir!"

"Well said, young man. You will get your reward if you do your work well."

"When am I to start, general?"

"Within an hour. You must return here in half an hour for further instructions. Meanwhile your time is your own."

Jack returned quickly to his old command but thought it best to keep his lips sealed regarding his future movements. On leaving them, however, he bade them all good-by affectionately, and gave a special commission to one of his friends which was to be rendered to his mother in case he never returned.

Many a wet eye watched the handsome young fellow as he made his way back to General Grant's headquarters, and many were the conjectures as to his probable mission.

"I cannot tell you any more than I have already regarding your work, young man," said the general, walking up to Jack; "I can only warn you to keep your eyes and ears open all the time and be sure not to let the enemy find out who you are. It is needless to tell you that they will make short work of you should they discover your real character. Now go and may good fortune attend you!"

Jack touched his cap and left the tent immediately.

He was taken in charge by one of the general's aides and supplied with a goodly amount of money, and a civilian's suit of clothes. He was then escorted to the outer lines of the camp and with a hearty Godspeed directed on his mission.

Though weak and exhausted from his recent experience Jack's ambition served to keep him at work, and he started on his journey with almost a light heart.

He continued to go forward, asking information from time to time from the houses along the road.

Finally he reached a small town through which a railroad run, and boarding the cars was soon whirling along toward danger.

Jack took advantage of the favorable opportunity to secure much-needed rest, and before the train had proceeded far he was fast asleep. When he awoke he found that it was growing dusk. He looked around to find the conductor, when he noticed directly in front of him two officers dressed in Confederate uniform, earnestly engaged in conversation.

He learned forward to get a closer look at them and to hear their words, when one of the officers, chancing to turn slightly, afforded Jack a view of his face.

It was Fred Jackson, Rachel's cousin, and his rival in love!

CHAPTER VII.

WITHIN THE ENEMY'S LINES.

Jack instantly drew his face into an obscured corner, when he recognized the young Confederate officer, but determined to hear what the conversation was about. So he leaned forward as far as possible, resting and partly concealing his face in his hands.

"The young whelp got away the other night in the dark," Jackson was saying to his companion, who was none other than the brother of Rachel and Teddy Wilson, "and I firmly believe that Rachel had a hand in his escape. He was pursued in hot haste after the discovery of his flight, but only his horse which was riderless was brought back. It's something of a mystery what became of him."

Jack almost smiled at these words and wondered how the two men in front of him would act if they knew that the captive of the night before was so near them.

"But what are you going to do at Vicksburg?" asked Paul Wilson. "Your command is not there."

"It's special service I've been sent to do by General Beauregard. He's heard that Grant intends to immediately move on that city, and that the Union spies are already within the place learning of its strength. I am deputized to see if I can discover any of them."

"But why didn't they select somebody in the city? I'm there with my command. Why didn't they pick me out?"

"That's one of the things, dear fellow, that I don't know."

"But entrance to the city is closed!"

"Yes, to everybody but those who have clear credentials, which are possible to obtain only from headquarters."

"This train doesn't run into Vicksburg?" said Paul, after a pause.

"No, it stops six miles north of here, and I'll have to tramp that distance along a dark road to-night to reach the city. But if I'm to have you for a companion I'll not mind it much."

"But I'm not going through now. I've got to stop near here and order some forage and then ride into the city on horseback."

"But you'll get into the city to-night, won't you?" asked Jackson, anxiously.

"Oh, yes, I'll be there before you are, Fred, for I've got to attend a ball there to-night."

"The one you were telling me about?"

"The same; but here's my getting-off place," he answered hastily, as he jumped from his seat and made for the door; "good-by, and take care of yourself."

The next moment he had swung himself from the train.

"You'll not be in the same lively spirits you are now the next time we meet, I'm thinking," Jackson muttered under his breath as he saw his cousin depart.

He looked about the car but paid no particular attention to the closely-muffled figure directly behind him.

Another half-hour's ride brought the train to the end of its route, and the Confederate officer quickly left the car, and after making a few inquiries as to the route to Vicksburg, he started down the road.

It was already beginning to grow dark, and Jack, after allowing his rival to get a considerable distance ahead, made after him, trusting to the night to offer him sufficient concealment.

"I must have his credentials," said Jack to himself as he plodded along; "if I get them I can enter the city in safety and do my work in short order."

The road along which the two men were now passing was thickly grown on both sides with heavy timber, which cast its shade so thickly that Jack almost lost sight of the officer he was following.

Neither house nor habitation of any kind was to be seen and the surroundings seemed absolutely deserted.

"Now's my chance!" exclaimed Jack, and pulling his revolver, he started on a silent trot after Jackson.

He had approached within a half-dozen paces of his man when the latter, hearing the footsteps behind him, suddenly turned and confronted Jack.

He did not recognize him in the dusk, but he saw the flashing revolver and instantly made a move to draw his own weapon.

"Put up your hands!" cried Jack, leveling his revolver at the other's head.

Jackson instantly recognized the voice of his rival, and forgetting the command in his excitement, exclaimed:

"How did you get here?"

"Put up your hands!" ordered Jack again, and the click of his revolver sounded ominously on the young Confederate's ear.

Jackson threw his hands into the air and waited in anxious silence for Jack's next move.

"Now, sir, I don't want to injure you, although you deserve to be after your cowardly conduct. I'll treat you without violence if you'll just kindly and quickly hand over the credentials which you have on your person and which are necessary to secure an entrance into Vicksburg."

"So you're a spy, eh?" exclaimed Jackson, with a sneer.

"It does not matter what I am at present. I want those papers, and in a hurry, too," Jack said as he stepped one pace nearer Jackson.

"Well, you'll have to have them, I suppose," he replied in a manner that showed our hero at once that he was trying to gain time.

"Yes, and in a hurry if you don't want the contents of this revolver," said Jack in a voice that showed he meant what he said.

Jackson put his hand in an inner pocket as if to draw out the papers demanded, but instead he pulled out a revolver, and before Jack was aware of his purpose shoved it into our hero's face and fired.

Jack drew away just in time to save himself and then quickly knocked the revolver from Jackson's hand to the further side of the road.

"I dislike to wound you intentionally, and do not intend to take unfair advantage of you, but I must have those papers. There's my revolver." And Jack laid it in the road beside his foe's. "Now come on if there's any fight in you, and show the stuff you're made of."

Before Jackson had any time to draw back or take to his legs our hero had seized him about the neck and borne him to the ground. The next instant he had pressed his knee upon the fallen man's breast and firmly secured him. Then he took the handkerchief from his pocket and turning Jackson on his face tightly bound his hands and arms behind him.

He then took his own handkerchief and bound firmly together his rival's feet.

Jackson gnashed his teeth in rage when he found himself so utterly powerless, and looked on with muttered threats as Jack took from his pocket his credentials.

"Now, sir," our hero continued, with a grim smile. "I'm going to trouble you for your coat, vest and trousers. They'll fit me very well and will stand me in good stead in the little job I'm about to undertake."

Jackson at first attempted to resist but he found himself so utterly helpless in Jack's hands that he gave up in despair and quietly allowed his clothes to be removed and Jack's to be substituted.

"You'll rue this, my fine fellow!" he finally exclaimed, when Jack had completed dressing himself in the Confederate uniform.

"All's fair in war, my friend; it may be your turn to be on top to-morrow."

So saying Jack placed the credentials in his pocket and picked up the revolvers and disposed them about his person. He then dragged his helpless foe to the side of the road and with a sarcastic adieu started down the road on a run.

In an hour he reached the Vicksburg outposts and was soon stopped by pickets. His credentials, however, signed by a Confederate general, quickly secured for him passage through the lines, and in a very short time he was within the rebel city.

CHAPTER VIII.

AT HEADQUARTERS.

The night was quite dark when Jack finally found himself alone, and for a long time he wandered up one street and down another in an indefinite way, trying to get the lay of the land.

The city was already under military control, and the guards he met scanned him in a suspicious manner. Paying but little attention to them he tried to formulate some plan by which he could reach the headquarters of General Pemberton, who was in command of the city.

"I'll have to hustle if I want to get my information from that quarter," he said to himself, "for the young gentleman I left down the road will surely be on my heels in a very short time. Wonder where the general's quarters are, anyway?"

He was standing in a dark corner as he mused thus, with his eyes bent on a large stone dwelling that stood well back from the street. Light streamed from the windows and there was all the signs of a scene of gayety within. Guests now and then hurried by the spot where he stood and made their way into the lighted mansion.

Suddenly there passed close to him two men with slouch hats and the general appearance of men of doubtful habits. They did not notice Jack, who kept silent as he listened to their words.

"You're sure he's in there to-night, are you, Bob?" the heavier man asked, extending his hand toward the lighted mansion.

"Sure's I got the letter from young Captain Jackson to-day, Billy," aswered his companion.

"But it seems a mighty strange thing that young Jackson would want to get his own cousin out o' the way. I don't understand that part of it."

"Humph, that's easy, Bill. You see Jackson has been a big gambler and lost all his own money and borrowed heavily from from his cousin. Now Jackson's in love with his cousin's sister, and if he can get him out of the way and marry her, why, he'll come in for a good share of her money; otherwise he's a dead duck. Beside, his cousin, who knows all about his gambling and all his other bad habits would never let his sister marry him."

"Well, if that's w'at he's after he's nothing but a mean, skulkin' varmint an' I ain't the man to do his dirty work. Yer better get somebody else in my place, Bob," said Bill, turning away.

"But, see here, Bill," said the other, catching his companion by the arm, "you ain't a-goin' back on a feller, now, are you? Jest look at the money there is in it. Two hundred apiece, man, and the risk ain't nothing to speak of. Come, come, brace up, and move along with me now," and Bob tried tried to drag his companion along.

At first Bill hesitated, but his pal's arguments soon overcame his scruples, and the two made their way slowly over the fence of the lighted residence and stole along cautiously in the shadow until they reached a low window.

"The villains!" exclaimed Jack, looking carefully after them. "They mean to kill the young fellow I saw on the train to-day. So that's the kind of a fellow I dealt with this afternoon, is it? Well, if he works his plans successfully and wins Rachel's hand by such deviltry as this, may I never show my face again."

So saying, Jack made his way toward the house by another route and slowly crawled to the spot where the two ruffians crouched.

"D'ye know him w'en you see him?" he heard Bob ask.

"Yes, seen him many a time about camp here."

"But you ain't going to strike now before he goes in?"

"No; when he starts to go home we'll fall on him from behind, strike him hard

on the head and then throw him in the nearest sewer-hole."

"So that's the plan, is it?" Jack murmured, crawling slowly away. "Well, then, I've just three hours to work those headquarters and get back and balk their little game. I can't afford to stay here and warn him, for I don't know when he'll be along, and if I waited too long, why it would only give that young wretch a chance to get after me. Now for headquarters," and leaping the fence lightly, Jack was off down the street.

By making diligent inquiries of some of the guards he met, Jack was finally able, after an hour's work, to reach the headquarters of General Pemberton. He passed the double sentinels at the door and was escorted into a large room where he was given a seat and told to wait until the general's aide appeared.

Jack's escort was no sooner out of the room than he begun to make note of everything about. On one of the tables lay several maps and a number of unfinished drawings. These he scanned with an eager eye, and with a thrill of joy found that they contained much valuable information.

He continued his quiet quest about the room keeping an eye constantly upon the door to be prepared for any one. In books and on paper which he caught up he saw many figures and plans that gave him a valuable insight into the strength of the city.

His eye all at once seized upon a little note-book lying on a desk with the name of the Confederate commander upon the cover. He picked it up and found it to contain a full statement of the various bodies of military within the city.

"Just what I want!" exclaimed Jack, and the next instant he had hidden it beneath his coat.

Almost at the same moment the door suddenly opened and a tall officer dressed in Confederate uniform stepped into the room.

Jack was a little confused by this sudden entrance, but quickly assumed a nonchalent air and made a proper salute.

"Well, sir, you're making yourself at home, I see," the officer said, seating himself at his desk.

"Improving my time, sir," Jack replied.

"Well, let's get down to business immediately. General Pemberton is sick to-night, and has delegated me to assign you your task. I presume your commanding officer has already given you an idea as to what it shall be."

"Nothing definite," aswered Jack, in a non-committal manner.

"Well, it's this: Halloo, what's that?" the officer exclaimed, as a perfect babel of voices from the outer door broke in on his ears.

The next moment the door of the room in which the two were was suddenly bursted open, and Fred Jackson, mud-bespattered and with clothing all disarranged, dashed in.

"So you've got this far, have you?" he cried, looking at Jack with blazing eyes. "Well, this is as far as you will get. This man, he said, turning to the dumfounded officer, "is a spy who overtook me down the road, stripped me of my clothing and made his way here by that means. Arrest him at once before he gets any more information."

Jack saw that his game was up at once if he did not put on a bold face.

"My credentials are here to be examined if there is any doubt as to my identity."

"Your credentials? They're mine," exclaimed Jackson, angrily. "Why don't you have him taken into custody at once," he continued, turning to the officer.

"Who can identify and substantiate your claim, young man?" asked Jackson.

"Your officer of the guard who stands at the door, and who came from the same county I did."

"Bring him in."

"Do you know this man?" asked the officer, when the chief of the guard appeared.

"I do."

"Who is he?"

"Captain Fred Jackson, of Company B, Tenth Volunteers."

"You can vouch for that?"

"I can."

"Then take this imposter to the guard-house, double-iron him and let him be tried as a spy in the morning."

Jack was accordingly led away between a double-guard, placed in a loathsome cellar beneath the building, and heavy iron chains placed on his ankles and wrists. When left alone he sunk on a low bench near the wall and buried his face in his hands.

"I can't even save Rachel's brother now," he cried.

CHAPTER IX.

WITH EYES WIDE OPEN.

"My God!" exclaimed Jack, as he heard the door of his prison closed with a clang, and the key turn in the lock; "I can never stay here while those two villains are about to take that man's life. I must get out and save him."

When Jack heard his guards slowly re

treat along the passage-way that led to the upper floor, he rose to his feet and in the darkness looked about him.

A pale stream of light directed him to the one small window in the walls of his prison. Making as little noise with his clanking chains as possible, he approached this and peered out. A small yard bounded by a high stone fence was all that met his gaze.

The window itself was protected by heavy iron bars between which there was scarcely room enough for Jack to pass his hand.

"I never can get out there," he said, with a sigh. "Wonder if there's anything I can pry 'em out with?"

He felt his way slowly about the floor but could find nothing that would answer for a pry.

Finally he reached the low bench on which he had sunk when he first entered the place. It was made of wood. Seizing one of its legs firmly he tried to loosen it. At first the support remained immovable, but after working it until his hands were sore and his muscles tired, he managed to wrench it loose without making any noise.

Springing to the window, he placed his improvised pry between two of the iron bars, and putting all his strength to the effort tried to loosen them.

For fifteen minutes he continued to exert himself but was at last compelled to give up the attempt to escape by that way. But he by no means gave up the struggle to get out. He wormed his way around the cellar floor in search of some instrument or weapon that would assist him.

Suddenly, over in one corner, a noise like the trickling of a small stream of water reached his ears. Jack hastily found his way thither and put his ear close to the wall. It was surely the sound of running water that he heard. He felt around with his hand and finally struck a small opening in the wall. Shoving his hand into this it touched cold water.

"It must lead to the sewer," he exclaimed to himself, when he had gone thus far; "if I can only crawl through I'll risk it, for if I stay here it'll be sure death, whereas if I get out I may have a chance to live."

Shoving his arm further into the hole he found that it was quite large after the opening was passed. As soon as he made this discovery he immediately set himself to work to enlarge the small space that led through the opening.

Several mortared stones of considerable size gave way before his fierce efforts, and by scraping with the sharp edges of the iron chain that bound his wrists he was able to remove a large part of the sand and earth that stood in his way to freedom.

Working steadily for a half-hour he was at last able to remove the small sewer crock at the opening and make a hole large enough to allow his body to pass into the sewer proper.

"Now I'd be all right if I had my hands and feet loose. As it is, I'll no sooner get outside than some of those pesky sentries will be after me," Jack murmured to himself as he drew away from the hole and gave one long look about his dark prison.

The next moment with a "Heaven help me!" upon his lips, he started to make his way through the loathsome hole.

At first the stench was frightful, almost unbearable, and nearly overcome he was several times tempted to turn back and wait for his fate.

But each time the thought of Rachel and her brother in his imminent danger forced him onward, and he had scarcely screwed his way more than fifty feet through the small sewer before he emerged into a much larger one in which the air was much purer.

A feeling of delight entered his heart as he stopped and took a long breath. He found he could move along now by simply stooping his head and wading knee-deep in the running water.

"This is a main sewer," he exclaimed; "now if I can only reach a basin I'll be all right."

He wormed himself slowly along, feeling the walls frequently for an opening of some kind.

A small gleam of light a few feet in advance suddenly struck his eye. He hastened forward with a half-suppressed cry of joy. It was the reflection of a street-lamp coming down through a sewer basin.

In hot haste he crawled through into the basin, and raising his arms sought to force the iron cover from its place and thus make an egress for himself.

At first the cover refused to move. Jack's strength, moreover, was well-nigh exhausted from his recent severe exertions, and he stood in his loathsome surroundings with scarcely enough ambition to raise his arms again.

An approaching footstep warned him to desist for a moment, but when it had passed he drew several long, deep breaths through the grating. This seemed to give him new life.

He put his strength to the task once more, and his heart lightened as he felt it give way and finally fall over, making a way for his escape.

He caught hold of the stone edges, and with a light leap managed to pull himself through to the walk.

Utterly exhausted, he reeled about in his soaking garments and finally fell in a dead faint in the gutter.

How long he lay thus he could never tell, but a sound of subdued voices near him some time later called him to his senses.

They were near, very near, almost over him.

He slowly and quietly turned his head around, but found that the overhanging edge of the basin screened him from the men who were talking.

"Funny, ain't it?" whispered one fellow, whose voice was thick with liquor, and whom Jack at once knew to be the man Bob whom he had fallen in with earlier in the evening. "This is the very place we wuz goin' to settle 'im, an' ther top's off ez nice ez kin be. Wonder w-who did it?"

"Dunno," answered his companion, finding needed support against the lamp-post; "dunno n-nothin' jest now, d'ye, Bob?"

"Halloo!" was Bob's answer in a thick but excited voice; "who's this?" And the next moment both men were stooping over our friend Jack.

CHAPTER X.

SHACKLES LOOSENED.

"W'y, I'll be blowed ef he h'ain't got bracelets on!" exclaimed Bob, after he had scrutinized Jack more carefully; "got 'em on his feet, too. W'y, Bill, w'at's this we've struck? Speak up, feller; w'at yez a doin' here wi' them things on?"

Jack made no answer until he had managed to reach a sitting posture on the curbstone. Then, with a well-feigned leer of drunkenness and a shaky voice, he said:

"W'y, you know, b-boys, I was boozin' to night, and because w'en I g-got back to my quarters I was noisy they put me in the guard-house and put these things on me." And Jack shook the iron chains that seemed just now to stand between him and liberty.

"I say, b-boys, won't you h-help me to get 'em off? They're tearing m-my flesh," he continued, when he saw that the two men before him did not intend to make any effort to release him; "I'll pay you well for it if you will."

The promise of pay speedily put the men in the proper humor.

Bob drew a heavy knife from his pocket and carelessly taking hold of his companion's revolver, he laid the shackles about Jack's wrists on the hard pavement, and with several quick blows succeeded in separating them.

Jack raised his arms in an ecstasy of relief and joy when the chains fell from his hands, and immediately set himself to work to loosen those about his ankles. The free use of the knife enabled him finally to release himself completely.

"Now, w-where's the money yer said yer'd give us?" asked Bob, in a threatening tone.

"Money?" answered Jack, with a quick glance at the weapons which the two men now held in their hands; "why, I promised you no money." And with a bold grasp he seized the knife and revolver from them, and turning on his heel fled down a neighboring street with all his speed.

After running a block he lapsed into a smart walk in order not to attract attention. He could hear the curses of the two men behind him as they tried with unsteady steps to make after him.

Jack secreted the two weapons about his person and then felt for the precious volume which he had picked up in the Confederate headquarters.

From beneath his coat where it had lodged he pulled it, and under a convenient lamp-post he stopped a moment to examine it.

It was thoroughly soaked, and some of the maps and figures were slightly blurred.

"But it'll have to do now," he exclaimed, as he replaced it in a pocket and continued on his way. "It'll not be safe for me to remain in this town a moment longer now than is absolutely necessary, for every guard and picket will soon know of my escape and be on the watch for me. If I was only sure that those two fiends wouldn't undertake their bloodthirsty job to-night I could skip now, but I can't go when I know that young fellow's in danger. If I could only see and warn him. Wonder what he'd say if he'd see me now in his cousin's clothes?"

Communing to himself thus Jack made his way back to that part of the city in which the great party was being held.

He finally reached it after narrowly escaping several times from running into the hands of a guard.

He took his stand in a dark door-way which afforded him a complete view of the scene, and from that vantage ground he awaited developments.

It was growing rapidly on toward midnight, he could see from the few people who moved along the streets. Moreover, from the great mansion across the way the guests had already begun to depart in considerable numbers.

Just as the bells of the city tolled out the hour of twelve there issued from the house opposite two young ladies, escorted by a handsome young officer in dress-uniform, that Jack instantly recognized as the young man he had seen on the train with Fred Jackson — Rachel's brother Paul.

When he had assisted the young ladies into their carriage, which was drawn up at the walk, and had directed his eyes longingly after it as it disappeared down the street, he turned slowly and started on his way toward his quarters.

When Jack saw that he was alone and that there was no fear of his discovery, he hurried after Paul. He had not covered half the distance that separated them, however, before Paul passed the street corner, and as he did so the two ruffians sprung upon him.

One of them caught hold of his arms while the other tried to throw him to the ground.

He struggled in their grasp for a moment. That moment was long enough for Jack to reach his side.

Seizing Bill he hurled him across the walk with sufficient force to cause him to fall in a heap in the gutter.

Bob no sooner saw that the game was up than he released his hold and made down the street with unsteady steps, his companion following as soon as he was able to regain his feet.

"Here, you skulking thieves!" exclaimed Paul as he started after the two men with the intention of capturing them; "stop, or I'll shoot!"

"Let them go," said Jack, seizing hold of the officer's arm and detaining him; "my assistance probably has saved your life. If an alarm is raised it will possibly result in the loss of mine. Now do me the favor to give me a little assistance." And Jack turned his eyes appealingly on the other.

"Why, who are you?" exclaimed Paul, turning his eyes full on our hero. "And how can the capture of those men possibly hurt you? Why, you have on a Confederate uniform, and an officer's, too. Who are you, anyway?"

"Come along, or we'll attract attention," replied Jack, dragging Paul down a side street where lights were few.

"Now, you'll be surprised by my story, no doubt," begun Jack, as he noted the mystified look on his companion's face. "But I am going to trust you with my secret and ask you for assistance in leaving this place. I am, in brief, the man to whom your cousin referred on the train to Vicksburg to-day."

"Not a Union spy!"

"The same!"

"Then, by heaven, I'll turn you over to the guard!"

So saying, Paul seized our hero about the waist and made an outcry that quickly brought a Confederate sentinel to the spot.

CHAPTER XI.

ILL-LUCK.

Just as the Confederate guard dashed up to the spot where the two men stood, Jack managed to turn in the other's grasp and whispered in his ear:

"Give me five minutes to explain all to you, and if I do not make everything satisfactory I'll let you turn me over to the guard."

"Well, go on, then," said Paul, as he dismissed the guard with an instruction that he return in five minutes, "and make your story short, for I have no time to waste on spies."

"Have you ever had any reason to suspect your cousin, Fred Jackson, of harboring ill-will against you?" Jack asked, quietly.

"How does that affect you?"

"You will please answer my questions if I am to clear myself in five minutes."

"Well, yes, then," answered Paul Wilson, with a pained expression on his face.

"To the extent of having you put out of the way, or in other words killed?"

"My God, no!" exclaimed Paul, with a start, and then the whole vile plot gradually dawned on him. "Were those the minions who just now pounced upon me?"

Jack nodded his head in the affirmative.

"But how do you know this?"

Our hero briefly related the manner in which he had overheard the plans of Fred Jackson's two hired assassins.

"And but for you I would probably now be dead. You have saved my life," and in the exuberance of his feelings, the young man seized Jack's hand and wrung it forcibly.

"But," he continued, as a look of pain crossed his face, "you are a spy by your own statement. You probably have already obtained the information for which you risked your life within our lines. I would be untrue to the cause for which I am fighting and for which I am willing to lay down my life if I allowed you to escape now. And yet I owe you my life, for you have but just saved it. What can I do; what can I do?" and the young man's voice sunk to a whisper, and he looked into Jack's face with an expression in which pity and pain were both combined.

"Do not allow yourself any pain on my account, my dear fellow," said Jack, nonchalantly, clapping the other familiarly. "I'll find a way out of this dilemma without bothering you."

Then, with a sudden turn on his heel, Jack broke away on a dead run in a direction opposite to that in which the guards had retired. For a moment Paul was so dazed by the turn of events that he was absolutely speechless. He looked after the rapidly retreating figure of his savior. Then he drew his hands across his eyes as if to clear his vision, and cried:

"After him, boys; he's a Union spy!"

Paul did not wait to see if the sentinels followed, but started after Jack with all his speed. But our hero had played his game so cleverly that he had already traversed several squares. He dropped into a long, dark alley when he had traversed thus far, and in a moment as he lay still his heart gave a thrill of joy as he saw Paul, closely followed by the guards, continue their pursuit along the street.

"Now I can get out of this place as fast as my legs can carry me. I have helped him out of his predicament and I've got the information that General Grant wants."

So saying, Jack stole cautiously down the alley into which he had turned in search of an exit. A high board fence impeded his way before he had traversed a dozen paces. Silently he climbed it. In his haste he did not notice what was beneath him on the other side, but dropped to the ground.

"Lord save us!" exclaimed a gruff voice as Jack felt his feet come heavily into contact with some one's else.

He stumbled and fell backward to the ground. When he tried to regain his feet he found two men standing over him in a threatening attitude. One had raised on high a fierce-looking bludgeon, the other had grasped in his right hand a long, shining steel blade.

One look told Jack that they were the two would-be murderers whose game he had so recently balked.

CHAPTER XII.

INTO OPEN ARMS.

"Who is it, Bill?" asked the man with the knife.

"Dunno an' don't care," replied Bill with an oath; "but I knows he hurt my steppers. Search 'im an' see if he's got anything wuth takin'."

Bob knelt down and made a move as if to unfasten Jack's coat.

Jack thought of the precious volume which it contained, and like a flash leaped to his feet and drew back for a struggle.

"Now see here, you scamps!" he exclaimed, retreating as the two men advanced upon him; "I've blocked one of your murderous games already, and though I don't want to get into the clutches of the guard, I'll be blamed if I don't make an outcry and call them to rope you in if you don't quit this nonsense."

There was a ring of determination in Jack's voice that for a moment awed the two wretches. They stopped and looked toward each other, uncertain what to do. Then Bill exclaimed:

"So you're the bloke we helped outen a hole, are you? Wal, I reckon our word 'ud be just as good as yours in court, so unless yer want ter be turned over, jest you peel off them duds an' let us go through 'em."

"I'll do nothing of the kind," answered Jack; "don't you see I'm a Confederate officer and that I can have you fellows sent up if I said the word."

"Officer, eh?" said Bill; "an' with iron bracelets on too, eh? Wal, that's kinder funny. An' yer don't want ter be took up, eh? Seems to me, young man, as you're summat of er spy, an' being such, we'll jest do our cause a service by turnin' you over."

Jack saw that his only hope of escape was by intimidation.

"Well," he spoke up briskly, "you fellows just let me get within sight of an officer or sentinel and I'll show you mighty quick what I am."

The two ruffians quailed a bit at this speech.

"We'll go through yer duds an' see what ye've got about yer, anyhow," said Bill, advancing once more upon Jack.

Our hero had by this time, however, fully recovered his senses and made up his mind as to how he should act.

He drew off and with a clenched fist struck Bill a terrific blow in the face.

Bill fell like a log, while Jack turned and avoided the deadly stroke which Bob aimed at him with his bludgeon.

With a clear way Jack now started to climb the fence and continue his escape.

He had scarcely mounted to the top, however, before a loud shot broke the stillness of the night.

This was instantly followed by several loud shouts of "Halt!"

Jack looked back and through the darkness saw several dusky forms climbing the fence which inclosed the opposite side of the yard into which he had descended.

The flashing of weapons and the loud noise which they made told Jack at once that they belonged to the night guard.

Bob, too, had by this time once more got into action and seized on Jack's leg with a stout hold.

"Let go, you villain!" exclaimed Jack in desperation as he gave Bob a blow on the pate that produced the same effect on him as it had on his companion.

Once more unencumbered Jack slid over the fence just as the guard reached it.

He broke into a run in the shadow, and had just reached the street when he ran directly into the arms of an officer, who was accompanied by two privates.

"Heaven save me!" murmured Jack to himself, for one fleeting glance into the face of the man who held him was sufficient to show him that his captor was none other than Captain Fred Jackson.

CHAPTER XIII.

HANGING IN MID AIR.

"So, my slippery bird, you've come up with a round turn at last, eh?" exclaimed Jackson when he recognized that his captive was Jack; "here, boys," he continued, shoving Jack toward his two companions, "take care of this fellow. If you let him get away now it'll be as much as your life is worth."

These words were scarcely out of Jackson's mouth and his men had no chance to observe his orders before the men who had fired on Jack came up with a rush.

The foremost jostled rudely against Jackson in the dark, whereupon the latter yelled:

"Look out there where you're going! Can't you use your eyes?"

"Oh, you wretch!" came from the other, and in a flash he had grasped Jackson about the neck and borne him to the ground. "You will plot against my life, will you?"

It was Paul Wilson, and in a fever of rage he had thrown himself upon his cousin.

Everything was instantly confusion.

Jackson's two companions forgot all about their captive and hastened to separate the two men who were now rolling about on the ground in a deadly struggle.

The man who had come up with Paul did the same.

Jack was not long in seizing the opportunity to flee.

He sped down the dark street like the wind.

He had not traveled far before he saw the gleam of water before him.

"It's the Mississippi," he exclaimed to himself, and the next instant he had directed his course toward it.

At the same time he heard far behind him the loud outcry and hubbub which told him at once that he was pursued.

Another half-mile run brought him to the edge of the high bank which descended to the river.

The bank was at this point so precipitous that it would have been at the risk of his life to have tried to climb down it.

Every moment his pursuers were getting nearer.

There was no possible place of concealment about him.

There was no time to try to reach a point where he might make a safe descent.

He stooped over in the darkness and felt the side of the bank in the hope of finding a crevice where he might lodge his foot.

As he did so his hand came in contact with a heavy twig projecting from the bank.

In a moment his mind was made up.

"I'll risk it, anyhow," Jack said to himself, and grasping hold of the frail support with both hands, he swung himself slowly and lightly over the edge of the bank.

In another moment he would have been caught, for he had scarcely disappeared below the bank before three of his pursuers came rushing up breathlessly and halted on the very brink.

"Queer," exclaimed one of them, as he scanned all about him. "I was sure I saw his light uniform ahead of us all the time, and here he's disappeared as suddenly as though the earth had swallowed him up."

"Mebbe he rushed over the bank in the dark," continued one of the others.

"Not if he had any eyes at all in his head," answered the first, "and I'm pretty sure he had, and sharp ones, too."

"Well, the best thing we can do now is to go back and report we can't find him, and then there'll be the devil to pay," answered the third man, as the three started to turn back.

Jack's hold on his support was by this time becoming very infirm, and he felt every moment that he must let go. Moreover, the twig itself was beginning to show alarming signs of giving away.

It snapped ominously once or twice, and then just when the three men were leaving the spot for good it broke short off and sent Jack spinning below.

"That's him," they exclaimed in one breath. "To the beach; we'll surely find him dead there after such a fall."

CHAPTER XIV.

AMID FLAME AND SMOKE.

Jack's fall was rapid, but through it all he managed to retain his senses.

Even in after years he never forgot the fleeting thoughts which passed through his mind during that terrible descent.

Home, mother, Rachel, his mission, his future, and a thousand other things flitted through his brain, and all combined to form a wish that he might live.

But he could not hope for that.

Below him was the low, sandy beach, and though he might even be so fortunate as to land upon his feet, he could not hope to withstand such an awful shock.

At the very instant when he had given up all hope of living through the fall, his foot lightly struck a ledge in the projecting rock.

Quicker than a flash Jack exerted all his strength and pushed himself far out from the bank.

It was his salvation, for in another instant he had dropped into the shallow water of the Mississippi.

The shock was of course a severe one, but the cool water quickly restored him to full consciousness, and he struck out manfully for a small cabin that was built a little way from the shore.

A few strong strokes brought him to it and with a light leap he found himself seated upon a few rough unsteady planks which served for a walk about the little cabin.

He had scarcely regained his breath before two well-known but vastly different sounds reached his ears.

One came from the shore, distant from him only a few paces—it was the confused voices of his pursuers; the other came from far out on the river—it was the long, loud boom of a cannon.

"It's the Yankee fleet trying to pass the town!" exclaimed Jack, referring to the latter sound and unconsciously ducking his head as he heard the great shot whistle by some distance from him and strike the high bank with a deep thud. "Now if I was only aboard one of those ships what a relief it would be!"

But Jack had little time to soliloquize. Almost before the dull boom of the first shot had died away on the night air he saw the long line of Confederate batteries on the brow of the hill belch forth their awful missives of destruction and make the darkness lurid and thick with flame and smoke.

The Union fleet replied with interest, and after the lapse of a few moments, during which each side seemed to be trying to get the exact lay of the other's position, both sides had begun a fierce midnight cannon-battle.

Jack's position was not a safe and much less a comfortable one.

He was directly in the range of the Yankee guns, and every few moments a great cannon-ball would whiz by his head and cause him to shiver as he heard it plow its way into the bank.

"I've got to get out of this pretty quick, or I'll be getting one of those big fellows so close that there won't be anything left of me. I can't go back to the store, for the whole town is now awake and I'd be gobbled up in less than a jiffy. Grant will need those papers mighty quick now, too, for he'll want to move on the town with the fleet in front here like that. Now if I could only reach one of those little fighters out there in the river they'd make short work of setting me on land in the right place. I'll risk it, anyway. I know it's mighty dangerous to venture out there with those rebel balls falling like hail, but I'd rather be killed out there by a rebel ball than to be gored to pieces here by a Yankee one without trying to help myself."

As he finished a great whizzing shot struck the corner of the shanty, ripped a dozen boards from their places and scattered them dangerously about Jack's head.

"That's a Godsend if it was a close escape!" he exclaimed, and instantly he started to arrange them in a raft.

Three of them together he found would support him easily. A fourth he used as a paddle.

Removing his shoes and coat to be ready for any emergency, and satisfying himself that his precious volume was safe, he knelt upon his frail craft, and pushing off started to paddle bravely out into the river which now seemed like a mass of flame and smoke.

CHAPTER XV.

VOW OF A FIEND.

Let us return for a moment to see how the affair between Jackson and his cousin has progressed.

The two men were very evenly matched in strength, but the impetuosity of Paul Wilson's attack had given him an advantage which he was not slow in making use of. His rage was perfectly unrestrained, and with the fierceness of a tiger he fastened his fingers into Jackson's throat with a clutch that shortly forbode disaster to that worthy.

Jackson was black in the face and his strength had entirely left him before the onlookers could tear Paul away.

When they finally did succeed in separating the two men and held them apart Paul, with a glaring eye, looked into the livid face of his cousin and fairly shouted in his anger:

"You're a miserable, skulking villain; and though thwarted now, I intend to get even with you by my own hands. But I'll be man enough to give you a show and not strike you down like a coward."

Jackson never answered a word, but calling his men to him, whispered:

"Where's the Yankee?"

"He's gone, with some of the men after him."

"Then we'll follow." And they started in the direction Jack and his pursuers had taken.

But Paul and the men who accompanied him did not continue the chase.

He dismissed them with a word, and then taking a hasty look in the direction in which his cousin had gone strode hastily down an opposite street.

A brisk walk of ten minutes brought him to his quarters.

He rearranged his clothing, picked up several articles which seemed to betoken his departure on a journey, and then hastened to the headquarters of the officer of the day.

"I want a permit for seven days' absence," he said, saluting that official.

"But do you not hear the guns of the enemy and our own warning us of a land attack in the near future? We cannot spare you in the present exigency," answered the officer of the day decisively.

"Then I shall apply to General Pemberton; this is a matter which may mean life and death. I must go, if not with official permission, then without it," and Paul strode out of the room.

Another brisk walk brought Paul to the headquarters of Pemberton. A few words and the exchange of the countersign gave him admittance to the presence of an aide.

"I want to see General Pemberton," Paul announced.

"But he is indisposed and cannot be disturbed," replied the aide, firmly.

"But I must see him; he is surely awake with all this bombardment going on. Go to him, please, and tell him that I wish but a moment's conference which may mean much to me."

Paul's voice shook a little as he made this request, and the aide, seeing that the young officer was strangely moved, left the room.

In five minutes he returned.

"General Pemberton will see you now," he announced, briefly.

Paul therefore hastened into the presence of the Confederate leader, whom he found propped up in bed, surrounded by several of his staff.

Paul made his salute, and then said, hastily:

"General, the officer of the day refused me permission to leave the city for a few days. As it may be a matter of more than ordinary moment, I have taken the liberty of applying to you."

"Why do you desire to go?"

Paul approached the bedside, and in tones too low to be heard by the officers present, whispered:

"I have a cousin, a member of the army now in the city, who is plotting against my life. Having failed in his attempt on it, I fear, for reasons which I cannot divulge, that he will turn his hatred against my two sisters alone at home. In the present emergency I desire to go to them and place them beyond the reach of his villainous hands."

"But at present we need the assistance of every man. In another twenty-four hours Grant may have surrounded us by land," said the general.

"And delay may mean the wrecking of my home, and the loss of two dearly-beloved sisters."

"Well, you may go," he responded, after a moment's pause, and Paul, thanking him earnestly, left the room.

"And now for home and to protect them," he murmured, as with furlough carefully sealed in his pocket he made his way through the outer lines.

Jackson continued after Jack's pursuers, and finally found them at the water's edge.

"He's escaped," they said, briefly.

"Escaped, you fools!" Jackson cried, in alarm. "But where? How?"

The men briefly explained.

"By heaven, I will not be foiled," he exclaimed, angrily; "here, men, go to your places; I need you no more."

Jackson gazed at their retreating figures, nodded his head as a whistling shot passed in close proximity to his ear, and then hastened to a place of safety. Here he stopped to think.

"By heaven!" he muttered, "I'll make both these fools suffer for their work and that in a way they little anticipate."

He paused for a moment with his fingers on his lips.

"I have it," he finally exclaimed, with a fiendish gasp of exultation. "I never can hope to win Rachel now, for that Yank stands in the way. For the rest of the family I don't care a straw. They're as well out of the world as in it, and it'll be one way of paying off my score against Paul. By heaven, I'll do it, and do it right away!"

CHAPTER XVI.

HEDGED IN BY FLAMES.

In another hour Fred Jackson was slowly working his way through the Confederate outposts, for he was leaving his command without a permit.

Several times he narrowly escaped being seen by the sentries who, in view of the firing on the river front, had received orders to double their vigilance.

When he had finally cleared the lines he broke into a run, which he kept up until he reached the little railroad station, where he intended to take a train for the nearest point to the Wilson homestead.

He was just about to enter the little building that served as a depot when, happening to glance through the window into the little waiting-room, he saw the form of his cousin, Paul Wilson, drawn up on a seat with his head bent as if in deep thought.

"By heaven, he's bound for home, too," exclaimed Jackson as he stepped back into the shadow; "now, curse it, that will spoil all my plans."

He meditated a moment and then an expression of exultation crossed his face, "no, he must perish with them. Let the work be done up brown," he muttered half-aloud.

A long wait of an hour in the early morning hours was finally rewarded by the arrival of the train.

Both men leaped lightly aboard, but Jackson took pains not to be seen by his cousin.

He bundled himself up in the rear coach when he saw Paul take the middle one.

It was broad daylight when the train drew into the station near the Wilson homestead. Paul hastened from the train and taking the first vehicle at hand started for his home.

Jackson alighted on the opposite side of the train, and when it pulled out of the station Paul was almost out of sight around a bend in the road.

"So good, so far," chuckled Jackson, as he made his way slowly into the station, which at that early hour was almost entirely unoccupied; "now if I can only manage to keep out of their sight until to-night, it'll be good-by Paul Wilson and his haughty little sister and the rest of the household. And as for that Yankee hireling, Stanley, why, he'll find I'm able to balk his little game in a way that he won't like."

Before the station-master or his assistants had a chance to recognize him, Jackson hurried down the road toward the Wilson home on foot. Within half a mile of it he stopped and found a hiding-place in a deserted outhouse.

The day passed slowly to Jackson. He would have suffered severely from hunger had not the spirit of revenge which had taken so complete possession of him occupied all his thoughts.

But night came at last, and with its approach he left his place of concealment and made his way cautiously toward the Wilson homestead.

Like a thief in the night he sneaked about the venerable building and gazed in at all the windows.

He saw his cousin Paul in the center of the happy home circle, surrounded by the anxious faces of his pretty cousins and aunt.

He ground his teeth in rage at the sight, and longed for the moment when he might begin his diabolical work in safety.

"Paul has scented danger and has hurried home here to try to prevent it. But he little expects how I shall strike him. You are doomed, my man, along with the fair ones about you." And Jackson shook his fist fiercely at the unconscious group.

At length he saw the lights in the house go out one by one.

"They're retiring," he said. "In another hour I can begin my work."

The hour came and found Jackson intent on his work.

Opening one of the basement windows of the house, he entered and made his way along to the fuel room. Here he gathered together an armful of shavings and light wood, and carrying it softly up to the first floor, deposited it carefully in several places throughout the house.

Then he returned, and procuring a large can of oil, poured it liberally upon and about each pile of shavings.

"I'll make a sure job of it," he murmured, as he paused in his work and looked up the main stair-way, at the foot of which he intended to begin his fiendish work.

The house was completely wrapped in slumber.

The occasional tapping of a branch swayed by the light breeze against a window pane was the only sound that broke the stillness of the night.

But the quiet seemed to work no effect on Jackson.

Stealthily he took a match from his pocket, and igniting it applied the flame to a little fuse of oil and shavings which connected with the pile at the stair-way.

When he saw it blaze up he hastened to the rear stair-way, where he had arranged another heap of inflammable stuff and lit that also.

Then the two remaining heaps were hastily ignited.

So fast did the first heap burn and so well was it arranged that before Jackson had finished his work the whole front stair-way was in flames and dense clouds of smoke were rolling through the house.

Woodwork and carpets and curtains and furniture quickly added fierceness to the flames, and almost before Jackson had time to reach a window, open it and leap lightly out upon the lawn and sneak away into the shadow of a neighboring hedge from which he could watch in safety the progress of his fiendish work, the whole lower story of the house was a raging furnace.

The flames as they rolled out of the lower windows lit up the night and made it as light as day.

Suddenly Jackson saw a startled face appear at an upper window.

The next instant the window was thrown hastily open and a voice raised high above the roar of the flames shouted:

"Help! help!".

It was Paul Wilson.

For an instant he gazed wildly out upon the night and then turning back upon the flames that were already beginning to light up the second story windows seemed to dash directly into them.

Paul had scarcely disappeared from view before Jackson saw two white, frightened faces appear at another window.

"It's Rachel and Teddy!" he exclaimed, with a chuckle of fiendish glee; "ah, ha, my fine birds, you've cast your last saucy looks on me?"

The two girls attempted to raise their windows but could not. Then they beat frantically against the glass but it did not yield to their efforts.

Dense clouds of smoke rolled about their half-clad forms. Now and then a sheet of flame shot into their room.

Then suffocated and overcome by the smoke and heat they both sunk to the floor out of sight.

"That ends them!" exclaimed Jackson, as he rose to his feet and started to quit the scene.

CHAPTER XVII.

STOPPED BY A BRACE OF PISTOLS.

"I hope I may never get into such a tight place again, if I ever live to get safely out of this," exclaimed Jack, as amid a shower of shells, shot and flame, and surrounded by clouds of smoke so thick that he could scarcely see the gun-boats for which he was steering, he paddled his way slowly out into the Mississippi.

His work of itself was most difficult, for his raft was unwieldy and his means of locomotion very crude and exhausting.

Adding to this the terrors of his most dangerous situation, the fear that every instant a 'hurtling cannon-ball would sweep him to death, it may readily be seen that Jack's wish was not without some reason.

But inspired by the immediate importance of his work he pressed on with all the strength at his command. Twice shots from the Confederate batteries tore away sections of his scanty support and he was almost on the point of taking to the water entirely when a shell fell so close to him that in exploding a piece of it struck the remaining plank and swept it from beneath him.

The next instant he was floundering about in the water.

The board which he held in his hands he pushed out before him.

It afforded him support and with his feet he managed to make some progress.

In his dilemma he did not forget the precious volume beneath his coat, but managing to extricate it before it was very wet he placed it beneath his cap.

Suddenly there loomed up directly before him the great black side of an iron-clad.

"Saved," thought Jack.

But alas, the next instant a piece of shell struck his left arm just below the elbow and cut a long gash in the flesh.

The blood flowed freely and caused our hero to loosen the hold of his left hand upon his support.

Still he pushed on.

The loss of blood was weakening but the object his journey was to attain was worth more to his country than his life.

His heart finally gave a great throb of joy as through the thick smoke he saw that he had reached the side of the Union iron-clad.

But still he was in a dilemma.

Above the awful roar of artillery he could not expect to make his voice heard by the men aboard.

And the great black sides of the vessel, with here and there a port-hole from which a cannon protruded, afforded him no chance of making himself seen.

"I'm as bad off as ever," he murmured as he looked up at the belching mouths of the cannon above him.

Then an inspiration struck him and he pushed his way along to the bow of the boat.

A moment's search was sufficient for him to discover a projecting iron rod on which he laid firm hold and managed to

drag himself slowly out of the water on to the boat.

He clambered along its side until he reached a port-hole.

Here he waited until he saw the cannon which projected from it discharge its missile of destruction.

When it was pulled back to be reloaded and the port-hole was left vacant Jack quickly slid down and crawled through into the midst of a group of astonished gunners.

Intent as they were on their work they all stopped when Jack made his appearance, and gazed at him with puzzled eyes.

"Why, he's a Johnnie," exclaimed the officer in charge of the gun, noticing the gray suit which Jack still wore.

"No, I'm not, sir," responded Jack, quietly, "and I'll trouble you to show me to the captain at once."

Jack's words carried weight, and in a moment more he was ushered into the presence of the captain of the iron-clad.

A few words explained his mission, his adventures, and his urgent desire to reach land and return to General Grant as soon as possible.

"Well done, my brave boy," exclaimed the captain, as he gazed in admiration at the modest and youthful figure before him. "You'll get a mention for this, surely. But your arm, what ails it?"

"Oh, it's only a scratch. A piece of shell and it got into a contest out there, and the flesh had to give in," said Jack, with a grim smile. "I'll trouble you to have the surgeon fix it up, though."

"To be sure," and Jack's wounded member was soon neatly bound up.

"And now, if you'll kindly assist me in reaching a place along the shore, you'll be doing General Grant a great favor, I'm sure," said Jack, as he moved toward the door.

"I dislike to have any of my men venture into such a storm of iron as this," answered the captain, slowly.

"But I've just come through it with only a scratch."

"Well, since it's so important, I suppose I must risk it. You can't wait till morning or until this fight closes, I suppose?"

"I can't wait ten minutes," responded Jack, decisively. "If you can't give me any help, why I'll have to try it alone, that's all."

"Oh, I couldn't think of that," said the captain, and he ordered two of his men to launch a small boat from the unexposed side of his craft, and implicitly obey Jack's orders.

Jack nastily made use of the captain's offer.

Leaping into the small boat, he took the tiller and commanded the two men to take the oars and pull hard.

They did as ordered, and Jack steered deftly through the great flotilla of Union boats without the slightest injury, and was soon making for a point of land some distance above Vicksburg, which an hour's hard pull enabled him to reach.

Jack leaped lightly ashore when the boat touched land, and after instructing the two sailors to return, made his way toward a small cabin in the gray dusk of the morning.

By dint of much rapping and oft repeated calls he finally managed to arouse the inmates.

"Wha' you want, wakin' folks dis yere time a-mornin'?"

"I want to know the way to the Union lines, and in a hurry, too," replied Jack.

"Take er straight cut 'cross ribber to whar dem pesky gun-boats been blazin' 'way an' keepin' folks scart outen their wits all dis yere bressed night."

"But I want to know where the lines on land are," exclaimed Jack, who could not suppress a smile at the negro's remark.

"Oh, dat's nuther thing, massa," and the voice seemed to soften a little. "But it's a long way, nigh on twenty-five miles 'cross country, and thirty-five by road."

"Well, and where's the road?"

"Take that one yunder, massa, an' keep straight 'long all de way till you'se gets to de Union sent'nels; dey'll tell you de rest."

"And can I get a horse here?"

"Han't got none here, but mebbe you'se kin get one up de road by de squire's."

Without waiting for further information, Jack hastened to the road and jogged along a mile until he reached a large mansion with a stable in the rear.

Daylight had not yet fully come, so Jack leaped the fence and entered the open stable doors.

"This is a clear case of must," he exclaimed to himself, as his eyes lit on a fine-looking steed. "I'll have to take it at any cost," and Jack entered the stall where the animal stood.

"I guess not, young man," said a strange voice behind him. Jack turned about to see where the voice came from, and found himself confronted by two gray-uniformed men and a brace of villainous-looking pistols.

CHAPTER XVIII.

TWO JOHNNIES FOOLED.

Jack did not lose his nerve for an instant.

Minutes were invaluable in his present haste. He knew that it was absolutely necessary that he should submit to no delay.

He determined to put on a bold face and press his way out.

"Well, what do you fellows want?" he demanded angrily, taking a step toward them.

"Guess it's our place ter ask what you want," said the tallest Confederate, as he made a move as if to seize Jack.

"Hands off me," the latter exclaimed, drawing back a step. "And if you fellows continue to interrupt me I'll report you to headquarters."

This speech caused the two pistols to drop. The two rebels looked at each other in dismay. Finally the spokesman said:

"But what right hev you ter come into er strange stable an' try ter run off with the best horse in it?"

"When a man's on spy business from headquarters and has orders to make double-quick time and take everything on his way that is necessary to help him along, it's expected he'll have to seize the best horses he finds."

Jack did not risk this statement without some backing.

He had figured its effect and knew how to push it.

"But how d'we know yer a spy?" asked rebel No. 1, in a voice that contained a sound of respect and admiration. "How do we know yer even a Johnnie?"

"Don't you see I wear a gray uniform the same as yourself?" said Jack, pointing to the bedraggled suit which he had taken from Fred Jackson, and with which he had not yet separated.

"Yes, that's all right, but yer papers? Don't they tell as yer a spy?"

It was a tight hole but Jack saw a way out of it. He quickly drew out the precious little book which he had purloined from General Pemberton's headquarters at Vicksburg, and opening to the title-page, displayed to the two rebels that Confederate leader's autograph.

They both looked at it silently for some time. Finally, No. 1 said:

"Guess it's all right, eh, Bill?"

Bill's education had been restricted, and the chances are that if Jack had shown him the signature of General Grant he would have known no more of it than he did of the one now displayed.

Bill, however, was anxious to conceal his lack of learning, so he slowly drawled out:

"Wall, it looks er little bit queer, but I guess it's all right."

Jack shut the book and replaced it in his coat.

"I hope you're satisfied now," he said, with an assumption of dignity.

"But hadn't yer better wait an hour er so. Pemberton's chief aide's been stoppin' in that house all night, an' I reckon he'll be movin' shortly. Don't yer want ter see him?" continued rebel No. 1, with a persistence that nearly caused Jack to lose his temper.

"I tell you I'm on urgent business from headquarters and can't stop to see any sleeping aide. Come, where's the saddle for this horse?"

In less time than it takes to tell it the two deluded Johnnies had saddled the horse and led it out of the stable.

Jack then quickly mounted, and digging his heels into the animal's sides made toward the road. He had hardly reached the gate before he heard a window in the house swing open and a loud voice cry out:

"Ho, where are you going with that horse?"

Jack turned his head and saw the form of a partially-clad Confederate officer protruding from the window.

"None of your business," called back Jack.

The next instant he was in the road, and with a loud whoop he urged the animal forward at full speed.

The discharge of a revolver and the sound of a bullet whizzing past in close proximity to his ear told him that he was in danger. But it would have taken a whole troop of whizzing bullets to have stopped Jack then.

Before another shot could be fired at him he was almost out of range.

He smiled grimly to himself and then turned to look back.

"Great Scott," he exclaimed, "they've started after me!"

He was right. The two rebels whom he had so neatly fooled in the stable, were now mounted and issuing into the road. They stopped a moment to receive orders from the form in the window; then they started in mad pursuit after our hero.

It was an exciting race, but Jack's horse was sure-footed and long-winded, and though several times his pursuers got close enough to fire several badly-aimed volleys, they never stood any chance of overtaking him, and after a half-hour's hard run finally gave up the chase and returned to the stables.

Jack sped on in the early morning with a haste that caused many woolly heads which he passed to shake in wonder, and many voices to exclaim: "Must be gwine on mighty pow'ful business!"

It was nearly noon when Jack reached

the Union outposts. At first there was a little difficulty in getting through the lines, owing to the deceiving uniform which he wore, but once his mission becoming known he was urged hastily forward.

"We're only waiting for you, to begin the forward movement," said the first officer he met.

Scenes on all sides confirmed the statement. Tents had been struck, baggage loaded and men drawn up in line, all ready for the movement on the Confederate city.

In ten minutes from the time when Jack passed the Union outposts he found himself before General Grant's headquarters, an old fashioned stone building, formerly a Southern mansion.

He leaped from his horse and started for the door. For the first time he thought of the terrible strain he had been under, and the awful pain he was suffering from his wounded arm.

An iron man could not have endured much more. It was too much for Jack.

Just as he reached the door he fell headlong in a dead faint.

CHAPTER XIX.

SAVED FROM FLAMES.

The first man to reach Jack's side was General Grant himself. He knelt down, and raising our hero's head to his knee, rubbed his cheeks gently and ordered one of his aides to bring a stimulant.

A single draft served to bring Jack to consciousness. He opened his eyes slowly and looked up into the general's face.

"Excuse me, sir; I didn't mean to act like this," he said, in a voice that told of the pain he was suffering from his wounded arm.

"Oh, that's all right, my boy," responded the general kindly, as he ordered his aides to assist Jack into his room.

Jack was placed in a big easy-chair, while General Grant took a seat before him.

"Your arm, my lad; is it hurt?" he inquired.

"Only scratched," Jack replied. "It can wait until after I have told you the results of my journey."

"Not much," said the general, hastily. "Here," he continued, addressing an aide who stood near, "send my surgeon here immediately."

In a moment that functionary appeared, and gave Jack's arm a thorough examination and dressing.

"Nothing but a flesh wound; you'll be over it in a week or two," he said, on leaving the room.

Jack then begun a clear and concise narrative of his experiences.

The general gave no sign of his pleasure, although he listened with rapt attention until Jack handed him the precious book.

He opened it, scanned it hastily, and then exclaimed:

"My lad, you're a brick!"

When Jack finished his story, which he had told with a modest attempt to keep himself in the background, General Grant grasped his uninjured hand and wrung in heartily.

"My boy, you're a hero. When I sent you out it was with a strange foreboding that I should never see you again. I appreciated the dangers of the task and should not have been in the least surprised if you had never shown up alive. But since you have, and with information which could not be more complete or rendered in better shape, I want to congratulate you. And you may be sure, when Vicksburg falls, as fall it surely will, your work will receive much of the credit."

"I only tried to do my duty to you and to my country. I ask for no other reward if I am convinced that I have done that," said Jack, with a quivering voice.

"You have done your duty and done it nobly," responded General Grant, warmly, "and you shall not go without some reward. But I must hasten our forward movement. I was waiting only for this to begin it," and the next instant orders were being dispatched in various directions for the advance.

"And now," the general said, turning again to Jack, "I suppose you want a furlough to get rested up in?"

"Oh, no," said our hero. "I'd rather move forward with the army, for I want to be present when Vicksburg falls."

"You're a plucky lad. But never fear, Vicksburg won't fall for a while yet, and meantime you can have a couple of weeks for your own personal use. Here's your furlough," and General Grant handed over an official-looking document, signed by himself.

"I thank you, sir."

"And, by the way, here's a letter left here two days ago by an old colored man who was bent on putting it into your own hands until convinced that it was impossible."

So saying, the general took from the mantel a dainty envelope and handed it to the spy.

Jack tore it open in haste and scanned it hastily, the general observing it with a smile.

"From your sweetheart, eh?" he asked, when Jack looked up with a red face.

"Yes, and she's in trouble, sir, and I must go to her at once. You see, she only lives a short way across the country with a younger sister and a maiden aunt, and it seems our troops here have been frightening and molesting them. You'll give me an order for a small guard to protect them, will you not, sir?"

"Assuredly," and in another moment the necessary order was in Jack's hand.

"Thank you, sir," he said, as he rose to his feet and moved toward the door.

"But you're not going to venture on that journey in your present weakened condition and with night coming on so soon. Better wait till morning."

"No, I'll go now if you'll have the kindness to allow me the horse I purloined this morning."

"No, not that one but a better, one of my own."

In ten minutes Jack was mounted and riding across the country in the direction of the Wilson home as fast as his injured arm and feeble condition would admit.

Darkness had already fallen before half the journey had been accomplished, and his stops to rest were so frequent that he feared his arrival would be so late as to find the occupants of the house all retired.

"I'll be able to save them from further annoyance, anyway," he consoled himself, as he looked through the night before him and listened to the steady tramp of many thousand feet away off to his rear.

At last he reached the well-known road on which the Wilson home stood. He strained his eyes in an attempt to see the outlines of the place that held his love when suddenly, just where he knew the house stood, a great flame shot up.

"It's fire!" exclaimed Jack, excitedly, and the next instant he dug his boots into the sides of his horse and dashed madly forward toward the burning building.

The entire lower story was ablaze when he arrived, and all of the hands about the plantation, who luckily lived in the quarters apart from the house, were rushing wildly around wringing their hands in an agony that allowed them no opportunity to render assistance to the imperiled ones within.

Jack did not wait to ask how the blaze had started.

Other work than that was cut out for him in the present emergency.

The first thing he had distinctly beheld within the burning house was the figure of Rachel, as she sunk to the floor before her chamber-window.

"A ladder! A ladder!" cried Jack, in a frenzy, to the old servant Mose, who stood near him. "Bring it quick!"

But there was no time to wait for ladders.

Forgetful of his exhausted condition; forgetful of his wounded arm; forgetful of everything but his perishing sweetheart, Jack rushed to the side of the building and seized hold of a climbing vine that had grown up the window ledges almost to the roof.

The vine held his weight, and hand over hand he ascended to the window of the young ladies' chamber.

With his elbow he broke in the panes of glass and then crawled through the aperture himself.

The smoke poured about him in blinding volumes, and the flames darted so close as almost to touch his skin.

He groped about until his hand came in contact with warm flesh.

"'Tis she!" he exclaimed, and the next instant he threw wide open the window, seized the slight form firmly beneath his injured arm, and grasping the vine by which he had ascended, slid slowly to the ground.

Jack laid his burden down and looked into the death-like face.

It was Teddy he had saved.

Rachel was still in the burning building.

Like a flash he turned, and started to ascend.

But help was now close at hand. A ladder had been procured, and it was raised to the broken window.

Two rounds at a time Jack ascended it and disappeared into smoke and flame while the few spectators looked on in terror.

In an instant he reappeared with a white form in his arms, and with unsteady steps came down the ladder and laid his second burden beside the first.

"Look well to them!" he said to the women standing about. "They only need fresh air and stimulant; give them both. I've got other work to do."

The next moment he had mounted his steed and was plunging down the road.

"I'm sure it was Fred Jackson I saw sneaking away as I came up. If it was, he's had a hand in this awful work, and if I find him, by heaven, he'll pay severely!"

CHAPTER XX.

CONCLUSION.

In spite of Jack's weakened condition, he had never been so full of fire as he was when he galloped down the road in pursuit of the man whom he thought he had recognized as Fred Jackson.

The memory or all past insults surged

through his mind, and coupled with the suspicion that Rachel's cousin started the fire, they made his brain surge and his heart call out for revenge.

Jack had not traveled over half a mile before he caught sight of the figure of a man skulking along the hedge that grew by the road-side.

He rode up quickly, and leaping from his horse confronted the man.

"So, I was right, you miserable wretch!" exclaimed Jack, as he grasped Jackson—for it was he—by the neck. "It was you who fired yonder home and tried to destroy two young lives, was it?"

Jackson trembled for an instant in Jack's clutch, then freeing himself he retreated a step, and exclaimed:

"Yes, it was I who did it. I'm not afraid to acknowledge it, now that your noisy tongue is to be stilled forever," and as he finished speaking he pulled a knife from his pocket and made a savage lunge at Jack.

But our hero, though unarmed, was prepared to receive the blow.

He seized the hand that held the knife and forced Jackson back a step.

Then with a sudden movement he threw his arm about the other's neck and forced him to the ground.

Then ensued a desperate struggle for the knife.

The two men rolled and tossed about, first one uppermost and then the other.

Jack, however, always managed to keep the blade away from his own body.

But he felt his strength going fast now, and foresaw that if the contest was not soon ended he would be the loser.

Accordingly he summoned all his strength for one grand effort.

With a grip of iron he wrenched Jackson's arm which held the knife so fiercely that at length that worthy, with a cry of pain, relinquished his hold and the blade fell to the ground.

Like a flash, Jack raised himself to his knees and at the same time reached down and picked up the knife.

Then, before his opponent could regain his feet, Jack forced him backward and planted his knees on his breast.

"You miserable villain, prepare to meet your just fate!" exclaimed Jack, as he elevated the knife on high preparatory to striking a fatal blow.

But something in the man's terrified face made him pause.

Then he continued, with a quick shake of the head:

"No, I'll not kill you; I'll leave you to the law which I trust will take care of you."

Before Jack had finished speaking, three figures on horseback rode up and alighted.

The foremost was Paul Wilson; his companions were Union soldiers who had, at his urgent request, started after Jack on learning of his strange and sudden flight.

Paul grasp Jack by the hand, then looked at his cousin.

"I thought so," he said, with a bitter ring in his voice. "But I didn't think that you could stoop so low."

He turned to the two soldiers who were just about to seize hold of Jackson.

But the latter was desperate.

His last hope was gone, and he knew if he was arrested it would mean an ignoble death.

His proud spirit could not bear that.

Before any one could interpose he seized his knife from Jack's grasp and plunged it into his own breast.

He gave one convulsive gasp and fell over dead.

Jack and Paul looked down in horror at the bloody figure, and then all four men moved away, Paul with an unsteady gait and a strange light in his eyes.

"I can never thank you enough for saving my sisters, Jack," Paul said, as they rode slowly back to the burned house. "I was going to their room myself when I met aunt fainting on the stairs, and was obliged to carry her out. When I started to return they told me of your noble work. I can never repay you for it."

"Oh, yes, you can," responded Jack, uneasily.

"How?"

"By giving your consent to the union of Rachel and myself."

"With all my heart."

And so—though not until the war was over and Jack, by continued meritorious service, had won the rank of colonel—there was a quiet wedding at the newly-built Wilson home, in which Jack and Rachel were the principals, and a loving mother from a Northern home an interested spectator.

THE END.

Running the Blockade.

"Did I ever tell you about the closest shave of my life?" inquired the old sea-dog, as he settled himself back in his arm-chair, knocking the ashes from his pipe in a meditative mood.

He was fond of spinning yarns, fighting his old battles over again, and, having retired from sea, his principal amuse-

ment consisted in surrounding himself in his snug bachelor quarters with a circle of interested neighbors, with a jug of stiff punch brewed by himself.

It was suspected by some of the audience that the old gentleman sometimes indulged in a sailor's love of romance, and allowed his imagination to get the upper hand of his veracity; but no one among the circle ever had the temerity to intimate their suspicions to their host, who, with all his social qualities, smacked slightly of the martinet.

"Fill your glasses and I'll tell you something about the blockade in our late war. I am a loyal man, understand, and love the old flag with as much devotion as any one afloat; but you see, times were bad, the Alabama had raised the mischief with our commerce, so I took charge of the Fleetwing, a full-rigged brig, and as smart a craft as ever crossed the Western ocean.

"I remember her as distinctly as if it were only yesterday," and the old man sighed heavily as a flood of bygone recollections flitted through his brain.

"The hull was of exquisite mold, with a clear run, bows sharp and snakish, rising with a gentle sheer.

"The taper spars raked well aft, and the yards, though long, and spreading a large amount of canvas, harmonized exactly with the outer portions of the vessel.

"All combined, she was the prettiest thing that ever attempted to run Uncle Sam's blockade.

"I had cleared from Liverpool with an assorted cargo for Nassau, and from there I watched my chance, finally slipping into Charleston without so much as sighting a cruiser. You see they had all been blown off shore in a heavy gale, and left the coast clear.

"You may depend the cloths, medical stores, ammunition, small arms, and a thousand notions found a ready market with the rebs, and it hurt my conscience to see the rich goods tumbling out on Palmetto wharf; but I had to live, you see, so I loaded down to the scupper with cotton, took on a deck-load, picked my crew, and was all ready for sea.

"In the offing beyond Fort Sumter I could see the spars of the blockading fleet, and, confound 'em, they did loom up terrible large and formidable at times, as I stood on the battery taking them all in with my binocular.

"I had dropped out into the stream, waiting for a favorable slant, having one passenger on board, a Confederate brigadier, going over with a batch of dispatches from Jeff Davis, for Louis Napoleon, who was always heart and soul with the Confederacy, confound him. But he got his just deserts from the Dutchmen for wishing us ill-luck, and it served him right.

"The right night came at last. The wind was blowing a taut breeze from the west-south-west directly off shore. There was no moon, while the twinkling stars were partially obscured by drifting masses of heavy clouds, every moment growing denser and denser. In fact, the weather had a decidedly dirty appearance; the barometer was steadily falling, which, of course, was all in our favor, and against the Johnny haul-tauts keeping watch and ward in the offing.

"The anchor was run up to the bow and catted, sail made, all lights extinguished, and the binnacle carefully covered up.

"Every precaution I could think of had been taken to insure success, and while the brigadier was busy securing his papers and traps in the cabin, I buttoned up my watch-coat, acting as my own pilot, which was no small undertaking when you understand that beacons, buoy and range-lights had all been removed.

"In lieu of them torpedoes had been planted thick as mustard seed, or weevels in a barrel of hard-tack, but I had the bearings of them all, you may depend.

"Heeling over to the breeze, we sped rapidly down the main ship channel, passed Fort Sumter, looming up grim and silent, then hauled up for Sullivan's Island, and you may say I was fairly clear of the harbor.

"I heard the chimes in old St. Michael's steeple toll out the hour of ten o'clock, and somehow it sounded dismal-like, for at any moment now I might expect to encounter a stray picket launch from the fleet.

"They were awful dare-devils, these sailors, and had been known to come right up under the walls of Sumter.

"I threaded the channel in safety, and was headed east by south, with the broad Atlantic before me, and everything drawing that could possibly be set on the Fleetwing.

"It would have done your eyes good to have seen her a clipping of it. I never saw anything glide through the water so rapidly and make so little fuss. The water just rolled off from either side of the sharp cut-water, dancing astern, leaving a broad wake of bubbles and foam to mark her passage.

"All hands were on deck, the look-outs were doubled, a careful hand at the wheel, and the log indicating ten and a half knots large.

"We were now getting the benefit of

the full strength of the breeze, which was increasing every moment, and showers of spray began to wet the bonnie deck-load of cotton worth almost its weight in gold; but I would not start, tack or sheet, the spars were tough, rigging and canvas new, and there would be plenty of time to take in sail when I felt assured that all danger was well astern of the Fleetwing.

"It was intensely dark; not an object could be seen, with the exception of the white caps forming the crests of the waves as they heaved up in the gloom, hissing and frothing in impotent fury, at times striking us under the counter with terrific force, lifting the stern bodily from the sea, and depressing the bows in a corresponding manner, while the brig almost flew over the boiling surges.

"Suddenly, the mate from the forecastle hailed:

"'Light right ahead, sir!'

"'Confound it, Mr. Barnes, I am not deaf. Be careful of your voice, sir, or you'll have a swarm of shells a-bustin' around our ears worse than so many yaller-headed hornets. Form a line, lads, from the break of the house to the forecastle, and pass the word along promptly.

"I was getting warmed up to the work, while the brigadier figeted about on the lee side of the quarter-deck like a fish out of the water.

"'Light on the starboard bow! Light on the port bow! Light to leeward! And lights to windward!' was reported in rapid succession, and confound it, for a moment it looked as if there was nothing but lights all around us. But it was too late to back out; it was neck or nothing with the Fleetwing, and I hustled up and down that quarter-deck pretty lively, I can tell you, with the lights growing brighter every moment, and flashing in my eyes in a sort of semi-circle.

"Go which way I would, I had got to run between some of 'em, and I made up my mind that Uncle Sam would soon be expendin' some shots and burnin' gunpowder.

"A low cry from the brigadier who was gazing intently to leeward, followed by a hoarse yell, and the report of a rifle, the ping of the ball whistling in uncomfortable proximity to my ear, made me cut a pretty lively pigeon wing, I can tell you.

"Dodging down to leeward, I looked in the direction pointed out by the soldier. I just caught a glimpse of an indistinct object disappearing in the gloom and mist of the gathering gale. It looked like a boat, and I presume it was, but I could not swear to it, and you may depend I did not stop to inquire.

"The next instant a train of glittering sparks rose with a rush above the dark horizon. A cluster of colored stars hovered on high for a moment, then all was dark as before. But Lord love ye, you have no idea what an effect that cussed rocket had. They commenced going up in all directions, like an exhibition of fireworks on a Fourth of July celebration. Occasionally I could hear the muffled roar of a gun, and as I commenced to get into the midst of the muss, I almost wished myself back safe alongside the wharf.

"The lee braces were now checked in slightly, and the course of the brig changed so as to pass under the stern of a large frigate, so I judged her from the row of blazing lights flashing through the open ports, while all was bustle and activity on her decks.

"We passed not a cable's length from her spanker boom, and I could distinctly see the battle-lanterns triced up in the riggings, but fortunately we escaped her notice, for one gun of her broadside would have been sufficient to have knocked all the profits out of the Fleetwing's cargo.

"I now took my station on the top-gallant forecastle, where I could see better what was going on around me.

"'Luff,' I muttered as my eye caught a dark, indistinct mass ahead, which I knew full well could be nothing but a blockader. Naught was now heard but the roaring and whistling of the gale as it tore through the rigging, causing the pitch pine spars to sway backward and bend like whip-handles. I was forced to let the royals and flying jib be taken in, which was done as quietly as possible. The next moment and we were in close proximity to the second watch-dog.

"This time we were compelled to cross the bow of the man-o'-war, and the end of her jib-boom seemed to be terribly close to us as we tore by. The low boom of breakers to leeward could occasionally be heard booming above the wash of the sea under our bows, which made a noise not unlike the roaring of Niagara.

"I could almost see the forefoot of the vessel of war as she rode to her anchors, rising and falling, rolling and wallowing in the trough of the Atlantic roll. In another instant we were lapping her bows, and rushing by with the speed of a race-horse.

"We were so close that the lights from her lanterns streamed across our deck, and I can tell you that those bales of cotton looked terrible small in my eyes as I caught a glimpse of some three hun-

dred heads peeping above the hammock nettings and through the open ports. A sudden commotion was apparent, a hail came faintly to my ears, and just as the gleam of the cabin-lamps shot out through the stern ports, I saw a flash, followed by the rush of a round-shot as it tore through the spanker.

"The man at the wheel could not stand that; it was too much for his nerves; the wheel slipped from his grasp as he stretched himself at full length on deck, while the brig shot up into the wind with everything shaking and snapping like a white squall on a spree.

"Well, now you can just bet it did not take this old man long to get aft, and in less time than it takes to relate it, I had the wheel myself, and the Fleetwing paying off, while shot and shell were flying around just as if the people had not been taxed to death to furnish the cussed things. But I reckon the old brig knew her danger as well as her master, for such getting up and getting I never saw before. I looked aloft a little anxiously, but beyond some rents in the canvas, a rope cut here and there we had escaped the dose without suffering materially.

"But the worst was yet to come, and I must confess I felt my hair curl as I took it all in. You see, the blockaders had dumped a of lot tar barrels overboard, all a-blazin' and in every direction they were bobbin' about, lighting up the entire scene, and of course revealin' us to their gaze, while they amused themselves by training their cussed guns on us. But a vessel under way, pitchin' and rollin', is a very uncertain mark, and although I calculated that close upon two ton of solid iron and fully as much gunpowder was burned, we did not suffer any damage to speak of, and I hung to it through all.

"Directly to windward, and coming down upon with a most vicious-looking bone in his mouth, was a sloop-of-war, and at every plunge she made I could see the spray fly clean over the foreyard. She was under all sail, her guns run out, with the crew all mustered at quarters. I thought for a moment she would run clean over us, and my heart was in my mouth.

"Bang! came a bow-chaser, and you ought to have seen the splinters fly from the tough old mainmast. The shot grazed it, taking out a good-sized chunk, then slid over to leeward and buried itself harmlessly in the bosom of a big sea. But the old stick never budged, despite the wound it had sustained.

"Then it was that the brigadier came to me, his face looking white in the faint glare of the binnacle.

"'Captain, we are about to be captured,' he said.

"'Who says so?' I demanded, carefully watching the distance between me and the sloop-of-war.

"'Why sir, can't you see for yourself? We are right under the guns of that Yankee sloop-of-war! Curse the luck! I am in for it, and I must destroy my papers. I wish I had never taken passage on your old tub!' and he ground the heel of his boot into the deck with rage as he turned to go below.

"I had no time to answer the darned saucy rebel, although I was near enough to have knocked the gray-coated critter clear over the taffrail.

"Another shot tore clean through the foresail, driving the mate and all hands off of the forecastle, and I saw them crawling behind the cotton bales for protection, like Jackson and his men, when they whipped the Britishers at New Orleans.

"I was just worked up, I tell you, and felt—oh, Lord! how I felt—as I put the wheel down, bringing the Fleetwing to the wind, with the guns of the sloop covering me as she sagged off to leeward.

"A fierce squall of rain at this moment swept over the vessel, the rush of the rain pattering like hailstones as it poured on the deck. The tar-barrels had died out, the man-of-war was hailing me, looming up to the leeward like an old shapeless building.

"'I surrender!' I yelled. 'Come and take us, for I believe the brig is sinking sure. Only don't fire any more of those cussed balls this way. You might hurt somebody.'

"I heard the indistinct roll of a drum, the chirp of a boatswain's whistle, as some boat was called away, then the obscure mass disappeared entirely from sight as the gloom of the squall settled down thicker and thicker.

"Now is our time, I thought. At all events it will do no harm to try. It will take some time for the man-of-war to pick up the boat's crew, so here goes.

"The main yard of the Fleetwing had been laid aback when we hove to, but it did not take me more than two minutes to kick those cussed skulkers from out between the cotton-bales. The braces were manned, yards laid square, and away we went again with my shoulder to the wheel. Glancing astern, I saw rocket after rocket going up, but they might just as well have saved the pooty things—I paid no further attention to them.

"'Light oh—right ahead!' roared the lookout frantically

"'The devil there is!' I muttered, as

I surrendered the wheel to a sailor, and hastened forward to to see what the character of the stranger was.

"Hastening on to the forecastle, I took one look—and it was enough.

"We were right on top of the man-of-war schooner that lay at anchor directly in our path. At the speed we were running, there was no time to shift the wheel or in the slightest degree alter the course of the brig. With the speed and fury of a shark in pursuit of its prey, the Fleetwing was almost leaping from wave to wave.

"The battle-lanterns were swinging to and fro in the rigging, and I caught the glint of a long-tom in the unsteady rays as it was pivoted amidships.

"The watch on deck had evidently seen us, but demoralized with terror, were unable or powerless to help themselves, as they ran aimlessly about the deck.

"With a terrible shock we struck the unfortunate schooner almost amidships, taking me clean off my feet, our thin, wedge-like cut-water and sharp, slim bows cutting through her like a knife.

"A yell of agony, mingled with the grinding and crushing of woodwork rang in my ears as I scrambled out of the lee scuppers, then all was still save the whistle of the wind, and the flapping of torn and tattered canvas. We were alone upon the foaming waters, with only here and there a phosphorescent patch of shooting streaks of light darting hither and thither as some denizen of the deep played in sportive circles about us.

"Not a vessel or a vestige of the blockading fleet could be seen, and I must admit I felt grateful for that fact. My neck felt very uncomfortable, and it was months before the terrible cry ceased to haunt my dreams.

"I would have averted the awful catastrophe if I could, but it was not to be. They died like men at their post of duty, and another time their fate might have been mine.

"But perhaps I didn't express myself to the brigadier when the danger was all over! I had not forgot his sharp words about cruising on board of my old tub, as he expressed it.

"He was meek and lowly enough the balance of the passage, and when I had landed him safe at Liverpool he would have hugged me; but I kept him at his distance. I never did like a rebel, and I have always considered that this government was by far too lenient in settling up with them cusses. If I had had the figuring of the trial balance I would have added up a far different result.

"But come, neighbors, fill your glasses. My throat is as dry as a herring, talking so much, and this jug of punch is uncommon good. We'll drink to the American Union, Free Trade, and Sailors Rights."—*Newark paper.*

The Clothes-Line Telegraph.

In the early part of 1863, when the Union army was encamped at Falmouth, and picketing the banks of the Rappahannock, the utmost tact and ingenuity were displayed, by the scouts and videttes, in gaining a knowledge of contemplated movements on the other side; and here, as at other various times, the shrewdness of the African camp attendants was very remarkable.

One circumstance in particular shows how quick the race are in learning the art of communicating by signals.

There came into the Union lines a negro from a farm on the other side of the river, known by the name of Dabney, who was found to possess a remarkably clear knowledge of the topography of the whole region; and he was employed as cook and body servant at headquarters.

When he first saw our system of army telegraphy, the idea interested him intensely, and he begged the operators to explain the signs to him.

They did so, and found that he could understand and remember the meaning of the various movements as well as any of his brethren of paler hue.

Not long after, his wife, who had come with him, expressed a great anxiety to be allowed to go over to the other side as a servant to a "secesh woman," whom General Hooker was about sending over to her friends.

The request was granted. Dabney's wife went across the Rappahannock, and in a few days was duly installed as laundress at the headquarters of a prominent rebel general.

Dabney, her husband, on the north bank, was soon found to be wonderfully well informed as to all the rebel plans.

Within an hour of the time that a movement of any kind was projected, or even discussed, among the rebel generals, Hooker knew all about it.

He knew which corps was moving, or about to move, in what direction, how long they had been on the march, and in what force; and all this knowledge came through Dabney, and his reports always turned out to be true.

Yet Dabney was never absent, and never talked with the scouts, and seemed

to be always taken up with his duties as cook and groom about headquarters.

How he obtained his information remained for some time a puzzle to the Union officers.

At length, upon much solicitation, he unfolded his marvelous secret to one of our officers.

Taking him to a point where a clear view could be obtained of Fredericksburg, he pointed out a little cabin in the suburbs near the river bank, and asked him if he saw that clothes-line with clothes on it to dry.

"Well," said he, "that clothes-line tells me in half an hour just what goes on at Lee's headquarters. You see my wife over there; she washes for the officers and cooks, and waits around, and as soon as she hears about any movement or anything going on, she comes down and moves the clothes on that line so I can understand it in a minute. That there gray shirt is Longstreet; and when she takes it off, it means he's gone down about Richmond. That white shirt means Hill; and when she moves it up to the west end of the line, Hill's corps has moved up stream. That red one is Stonewall. He's down on the right now, and if he moves, she will move that red shirt."

One morning Dabney came in and reported a movement over there.

"But," says he, "it don't amount to anything. They're only making believe."

An officer went out to look at the clothes-line telegraph through his field-glass.

There had been quite a shifting over there among the army flannels.

"But how do you know but there is something in it?"

"Do you see those two blankets pinned together at the bottom?" said Dabney.

"Yes; but what of it?" said the officer.

"Why, that's her way of making a fish-trap; and when she pins the clothes together that way, it means that Lee is only trying to draw us into his fish-trap."

As long as the two armies lay watching each other on opposite banks of the stream, Dabney, with his clothes-line telegraph, continued to be one of the promptest and most reliable of General Hooker's scouts.

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